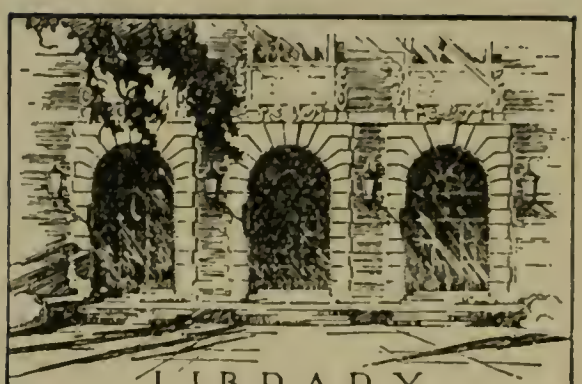

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THE WOODMAN;

A ROMANCE

OF

THE TIMES OF RICHARD III.

BY

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THE WOODMAN.

CHAPTER I.

In the course of this work I have mentioned several roads, the direction of each of which will be very easily understood by those who have an acquaintance with the locality, even in the present day. For those who have not, however, I must add a few words of explanation. One road, passing over the abbey green and between the houses on the western side, descended the slope, on the top of which the buildings

stood, and then, running through the lower part of the wood, ascended the higher hill, cutting straight across the heart of the forest. At the bottom of the slope, however, just under the abbey, and at the distance of, perhaps, a quarter of a mile, this road was entered by another, which, coming through the lower ground from the hamlet at Coleshill, and joining the valley and the stream at the distance of about a mile from that place, followed all the meanders which the little river chose to take, till it reached the spot I have mentioned. At the point where the two roads met, Sir John Godscroft, after distributing his men around the wood, fixed his temporary head quarters, and took the measures which he thought necessary for obtaining information. Two messengers were also sent off in haste in different directions ; and every peasant who could be brought in was strictly interrogated as well as the bailiff of the abbey, who was subjected to more than one cross examination. The information of the bailiff was peculiarly valuable, not so much because it was eagerly

and minutely given, both from motives of revenge and apprehension, as because it afforded the most perfect and detailed account of every part of the abbey, as far as it was known to the coward himself. From it, Sir John Godscroft satisfied himself completely, first, that no part of the abbey where a man could be concealed had escaped search, and secondly, that the fugitive must have taken refuge in that portion of the forest lying to the right of the road as you ascended the hill. With this conviction he established a line of patrols all round the wood, too close, as he thought, for any man to pass unnoticed, and then wrapping himself in his cloak, with a saddle for his pillow, he gave himself up to sleep. Twice he woke during the night, and mounting his horse, rode at a rapid pace round the whole of that part of the wood which he was watching so eagerly, and ever as he went, he encouraged the men on duty, by reminding them that a reward of a thousand marks was promised for the capture of the bishop of Ely.

"Be vigilant till morning," he said, "and then we will search the wood. In a few hundred acres like this, it is impossible he can escape."

He once more stretched himself on the ground, when it wanted about an hour to dawn, and had slept for somewhat more than half an hour, when he was roused by the return of one of his messengers.

"Up into the saddle, Sir John, up into the saddle!" said the man; "Sir William Catesby is at my heels with full five hundred spears. He rose and mounted at once, as soon as he got your message; and his men say that he has a warrant under the king's own hand, for the arrest of the bishop and several others."

Godscroft looked somewhat grim at this intelligence, imagining, perhaps, that the reward he anticipated was likely to be snatched from his grasp by another. What he might have done in these circumstances, had there been time for deliberate thought and action, I cannot tell; but before he could well shake off the

effects of sleep, the head of Catesby's troop came down from the green; and the crafty and dissimulating minister of Richard, sprang to the ground by his side.

Catesby took Sir John Godscroft by the hand, and divining, perhaps, what might be the impression produced by his coming, said in a loud, frank tone, "Sir John, you and your brave companions have done the king good service, which will not be easily forgotten. Think not that I come either to share or take away your reward, but simply as a loyal subject and a good soldier, to do my duty to my prince and my country, without any recompense whatever. We must have this traitor before noon to-morrow."

"That shall we, beyond doubt, Sir William," replied the other, while a good number of the soldiers stood round and listened. "With the force which you have brought, one body can surround the wood while the other searches."

"I must detach a considerable troop," replied Catesby, "to pursue the party of Lord

Chartley to Hinckley; for I have authority to attach every one who has contributed in any degree to the escape of this proclaimed traitor the bishop of Ely."

"Then I have a notion you must attach the abbess of St. Clare," said Godscroft, "for she has certainly sheltered him and favoured his evasion, since the young lord left him there."

"How many men has Chartley with him?" demanded Catesby, not appearing to notice the suggestion regarding the abbess.

"Well nigh upon fifty," answered Godscroft, and then added, returning to the point: "Had you not better secure the abbey first?"

"No, no," answered Catesby; "we must not violate sanctuary, nor touch the privileges of the church;" and taking Godscroft's arm he said in a low voice, "What is the meaning of those houses I see burned upon the green; I hope your men have not done it."

"Good faith but they have," answered the other: "altogether contrary to my orders though; and I have hanged several of them for their pains."

"Better keep this from the king's ears," said Catesby, musing. "However, we must have the bishop, Sir John, and this young Lord Chartley too, who has been clearly privy to Morton's visit to England, which makes it a case of misprision of treason, for which disease the axe is the only remedy I know."

After uttering these bitter words in a somewhat jocose tone, he returned to the head of his troop, and gave some orders, which immediately caused a party of forty-eight or fifty men, to ride on, with all speed, upon the same road which had been taken the night before by Chartley and his companions. The rest of Catesby's dispositions were soon made; for, in order not to disappoint Sir John Godscroft and his companions of their prey, he reserved to the regular soldiers the simple task of guarding the wood, while it was searched by Godscroft's band. Nothing, however, could be done till day-break, beyond a few preliminary arrangements; and the rest of the time was spent by the two leaders in walking up and down, and

conversing over the events in which they took an interest.

"If we had but known an hour or two before," said Sir John Godscroft, "we should have caught the bishop in the abbey. We lost no time by the way, nor in setting out either; for we were not five minutes out of the saddle after Sir Charles's messenger arrived. 'Tis marvellous he did not send before; for his man tells me he was more than a whole day in the bishop's company, and knew him from the first."

"He could not help it;" answered Catesby. "He wrote at once to the king and to myself; but it was agreed on all hands that it would be better for Weinants to follow him till he was lodged somewhere for the night; for, if we had attempted to take him in Tamworth yesterday morning—not having known soon enough to seize him in his bed--he would have escaped to a certainty, in the confusion of the fair. Then to catch him on the road would have been difficult, for Chartley's party is large; and a very little resistance on their part would have

given him time to fly. No, no, Weinants is wonderfully shrewd and discreet; and he calculated to a nicety, that this traitor prelate would either stop here upon some pretence, while the rest rode on to Hinckley, or go on with them to Hinckley, where he could be taken without trouble.—Is not the sky turning somewhat grayer, think you?"

"Methinks it is," replied the other.

"Well then, let us to our work," said Catesby. "You must dismount your men, and let two or three enter at the mouth of every path, pursuing it through its whole track, till they meet somewhere in the centre of the wood. Have you any one who knows the forest well?"

"But few," replied the other. "However, I have remarked, when riding by on the other road, the towers of an old castle rising up, about the middle of this part which we have surrounded. They can all direct their steps thither—"

"Aye, and search the castle too," said Catesby. "He must have some one to guide

him, depend upon it. The ruin will be a good place for refuge."

"If we find him not at the first essay," responded the other, "we can afterwards take the wood in separate portions, and beat through every thicket, as we should for a stag."

"Away then, away!" answered Catesby. "It will be well day before we have commenced."

CHAPTER II.

The opening of the door of the hall startled Iola from her slumber; and when she found where her head had been resting, a bright warm blush spread over her fair face. Though the lamp was by this time glimmering low, the form and face of the woodman were instantly recognized by all the party in the hall; and an expression of gladness came over all their faces. He was instantly assailed by many questions which he could not answer; but he told all he knew; and one piece of information was at all events, satisfactory to both Chartley and Iola,

namely, that the bishop had escaped. "There," he continued, setting down the food and wine which he carried; "there is something to refresh you, young people, though good sooth lady, I thought you were by this time safe within the walls of the abbey, and would rather it had been so."

"And so would I," answered Iola, though perhaps, her heart was at that moment a little doubtful; "but it could not be, Boyd, for the door in the cell was closed when I went back—I fancy the bishop had let it slip from his hand—and I could not return to the abbey without passing through the midst of the armed men. Then as I was hurrying towards your cottage for shelter and protection, I met with this noble Lord, who told me the soldiers were upon the road——"

"And proved a pleasanter protector than an old woodman, I doubt not," replied Boyd, with a cynical smile.

Iola's face reddened again; but she replied frankly; "a noble, a kind, and a generous

one certainly, to whom I shall ever feel indebted."

"One does not choose in a thunderstorm, my good friend," said Chartley, in his usual gay tone, "whether one will take refuge in a palace or a hermitage. The nearest place at hand, is the best; and this fair lady I doubt not, cared not much whether it was a lord or a woodman that came to her aid, so that she got help at need. But now let us think of what is to be done. Morning will soon be here; and some course of action must be determined."

"What course do you propose?" asked Boyd.

"Nay, I know not," answered Chartley. "The only thing I can think of is, to take the lady by the hand, and walk straight through these men back to the abbey with her. They cannot prove me to be a bishop nor her either, I suppose."

The woodman mused, and then pointing to the provisions, he said; "Eat and drink, eat and drink; you can do that and think too—They

cannot prove either of you to be the bishop, I wish you were anything so good; but they can, perhaps, prove that you have, both of you, helped the bishop; and they can make treason out of that, I doubt not, after the proclamation. 'Tis an awkward case," he continued; "but if you wait awhile, the piper will bring us intelligence. The best spies in the world are pipers, horse doctors, and mendicant friars. Perhaps, the tidings he brings may save you the trouble of decision."

"That is always something gained," replied Chartley;" for decision is sometimes the hardest work we have to do; but yet I think my plan may be the best after all; for they can prove but little against me, and nothing against this sweet lady. They can but suppose that I am conducting her back to the abbey from some visit or expedition, with which they have nought to do."

"Ha!" exclaimed the woodman, sternly; "thou would'st not risk her name and fair fame, young lord? Some visit! What in this garb,

without coif, or veil, or mantle—on foot, with no attendants? No, no. If she were to be met and questioned, she must e'en tell the truth, for to suffer prison, or to lose life itself, were such a thing probable, were but light to a taint upon her name."

"And who would dare utter such an insinuation in my presence?" exclaimed Chartley, his eye flashing at the thought. "By Heaven, if any man did, I would cram it down his throat with my sword."

"So hot!" said the woodman, with a laugh. "If they did not utter it in your presence, they might utter it behind your back, which were as bad. They might say—and how could you deny it?—that this lady had been out of the abbey with you, roaming about no one knew whither, without motive, without cause, without excuse. No, no? That will not do. Lord Chartley cannot fight or frighten two hundred men; and they will have a reason for all this, depend upon it. If not, they'll make one. 'Tis most unlucky that I knew not of these events before,

or I would have found means to send to the abbey, and have the door from the cell opened; but it is now too late I fear; and at all events, we must wait for further intelligence. But fear not, lady, fear not. We will find resources, which are many here, though not quite so plentiful as the acorns on the trees."

"I am not afraid," answered Iola. "The king, I do not think, would kill me for guiding the bishop into the wood."

"But he might prevent your marrying the man of your heart," answered the woodman, with one of his grim smiles.

Iola's colour rose a little; but she replied boldly: "I have no man of my heart, Boyd; and therefore he could not do that either."

Chartley's eye had turned rapidly to Iola's face, as the woodman spoke, with an anxious and inquiring look; but her frank reply seemed to relieve him; and he said gaily: "Nevertheless, we must not risk anything where there is risk to you, dear lady. Methinks you are one who would find even gesses of silk or

gold cord difficult to wear; and we must give Richard no excuse for putting them on, if we can help it."

"Women are born to wear gesses of some kind or another, noble lord," replied Iola; "and unhappy is the woman who cannot content herself with them; but I trust you will consult your own safety without heeding mine."

"Not I in faith," answered Chartley, in a determined tone. "I will see you back to the abbey, and safe in the hands of your friends, come what will—that is to say, if I have power to do so. They may take my life or my liberty; but no man has power to make me break my word or fail in my devoir."

"Well, well," said the woodman; "let us think of these things no more. Come take some bread, good friend," he continued, speaking to the Arab. "There is salt in it, and you can e'en taste the bottle too, I dare say, for you cannot tell what are the contents."

He then leaned his head upon his hand, as he lay stretched out by the fire, and seemed to

fall asleep, while Iola and Chartley conversed in low tones. But, though his eyes were closed, it was not with slumber; and at length, after an hour or somewhat more had passed, he and the Arab both started up at once, the woodman exclaiming: "Hark! there is our messenger! Come forth with me, my Lord, and meet him. Your trusty infidel can stay and protect the lady."

Chartley followed at once; and the woodman strode rapidly across the court, but suddenly stopped, under the old arch of the gateway; and laying his hand upon Lord Chartley's arm, he said in a low, serious tone: "Are you aware, my Lord, that the Lady Iola St. Leger, is contracted in marriage to Arnold Lord Fulmer."

Chartley stood and gazed at him in silence, with his brow contracted and his lip quivering. He could not or he would not reply; and the woodman went on saying: "I am sorry you did not know this. It should have been told you before."

"It should, indeed," replied Chartley; and then after a pause, he added: "But it matters not, she is not to blame. More than once I have seen something hanging on her lips, as if seeking utterance but afraid to venture forth. If I had told her what was growing upon my heart, she would have spoken."

"Most likely," answered the woodman; "for hers is a heart very soon seen through. 'Tis like a clear well, where one can trace all the pebbles in the bottom—their shape, their colour, and if anything obscures them, it is but a light ripple from a passing wind."

"And yet she said but now, that she had no love," replied Chartley, moodily.

"And that is true also," answered the woodman; "contracted in infancy, how can she love a man she does not even recollect."

"Well, 'tis no matter," answered Chartley; "the vision of happiness will pass away, and it is something to have served, protected, comforted her—Hark, the man is drawing near with

a low and solemn dirge, as if we were all to be slain and buried ere noon. There is the dawn too, coming in the east, if I mistake not. Let us go on, and stop the piper's melancholy squeaking."

"'Tis but a sign he is not followed," replied the woodman, detaining him. "Let us stay here, we might miss him in some of the turnings; I will whistle, however, to show him that we hear, and then perhaps he will stop."

But the inveterate piper droned on, till he was within sight of the gates, and Chartley and the woodman went down to meet him.

"What news, what news?" they both demanded, eagerly.

"Bad tidings," answered the piper, shaking his head. "First, my lord, you owe me a gold angel."

"There are two," answered Chartley, sharply. "Now for the rest."

"Why then, it is but this," answered Sam. "The rogue, Catesby, has come down with five

hundred horse. He has sent on fifty to arrest your lordship at Hinckley, before you are out of bed in the morning. The rest he keeps here to surround the wood, while good Sir John Godscroft searches every nook and corner of it and the old castle and all, to find the bishop and any one who may have aided in his escape from the abbey. They will not leave any stone unturned, depend upon it; and they swear by their beards, God bless them, that every one who has had any hand in it, is a foul traitor, worthy of gibbet and post."

"Then are we in a strait indeed," exclaimed Chartley; "for with four hundred and fifty men to watch the wood, and two hundred to search it, there is but little chance of escape. I care not for myself, woodman, if you can but save the lady without scaith or ill construction."

"On my life 'tis that that puzzles me most," answered Boyd; "there may be help at hand, for I have provided some. Your own people, too, will be back soon, for I have sent for them;

but we have no force to cope with such a number."

„Nay," answered Chartley; "give me but ten men, and I will break through their line, at least so as to lodge the lady in the abbey. Then as for my own fate, fall what may, I little care."

"Ten men you can have," answered the woodman;" but tell me first, my good lord, what you intend to do?"

"Make at once for the nearest door of the abbey," replied Chartley. "Their line must be thin around the wood, and on that side, perhaps, the thinnest. Grant that we fall in with some of Catesby's men, as most like we shall. "We can make head against them for a time, and insure the lady's reaching the gates of the abbey."

"It were better," said Boyd, after thinking for a moment, "that while one part keep the king's men engaged, two or three of the others carry the lady quickly across the dell to the little gate. We have no other chance that I

see; but remember, my good lord, that you will be overpowered and taken to a certainty."

"What matters it?" exclaimed Chartley. "Even were one to act on mere calculation, 'tis better to lose one than to lose two. Here we should be both taken together, there we insure her escape. Let us waste no more time in talking. How can we get the men?"

The woodman threw his eye over the edge of the hill on which they were standing, and replied, "You can have them at once." Then putting his horn to his lips, he blew a low and peculiar note; "and, in a moment after, several men were seen running up from amongst the trees and bushes which covered the descent. "We must lose no time," said the woodman, "but forward with all speed, or we shall have the search begun and be cut off. You bring the lady forth while I speak to the men."

Chartley turned to go; but pausing suddenly, he said; "Remember, my good friend, it is on you that I rely to bear the lady safe to the abbey, while I engage the troopers. Think

not on my safety for one moment; but take some whom you can trust, and away with her at once. I would fain have seen her safe myself; but it must not be. The dream is at an end."

The woodman gazed at him with a well pleased smile, which made his stern countenance look bright and sweet; and Chartley, without waiting for further words, hurried away into the ruin.

"There goes a nobleman indeed," said the woodman; and then striding forward, he met the men who were advancing up the hill.

"How many men have you got, David?" he continued, addressing the first man who came up.

"There are twelve of us," replied the man. "Three are wanting. I suppose they have stopped them. Most of us slipped through unseen; and the rest got through in different places, on telling their calling."

A short consultation then ensued, which, brief as it was, had hardly ceased when Chart-

ley again came forth, bringing Iola with him. Her face was pale ; and she was evidently agitated and alarmed ; but she did not suffer fear or hesitation to embarrass in any degree the proceedings of the others. Holding tight by Chartley's arm, with the woodman and one of his men close behind them, and preceded and followed by the rest, divided into two bodies, she was led on, through one of the narrowest paths, down to the bottom of the little rise on which the castle stood. They then crossed a somewhat wider road, running by the bank and fountain I have mentioned before, and then plunged again into the thicker part of the wood. Hardly had they done so however, when the sound of a horn was heard upon the right ; and turning back his head towards the woodman, Chartley said in a low voice, "The hunt has begun."

"Wary, wary," said the woodman. "Keep a sharp ear there in front, and halt in time."

With a somewhat slower step they walked

on for a couple of hundred yards further; and then the two men at the head of their little column suddenly stopped, one of them holding up his hand as a signal to those behind. The sun had not actually risen; but yet the gray morning light had spread over the whole sky; and, though the path was somewhat dark and gloomy from the thick copse on either side and the manifold naked branches of the trees over head, yet, the motions of each of the little party could be seen by the rest. All stopped at once; and a dead silence succeeded amongst themselves, through which, the moment after, the sound of voices and footsteps could be heard, at the distance of a few paces from them. The woodman laid his finger on his lips and listened; but there was a smile upon his face which gave courage to Iola, although the sounds seemed to be approaching fast. So distinctly were they heard indeed, the moment after, that it seemed as if a space of not more than five or six yards was left between the fugitive and the searchers; and Iola clung

closer to Chartley's arm, and looked up in his face, as if asking what would come next. He did not venture to offer any consolation, but by a look; and still the steps and the voices came nearer.

"'Tis as thick as a hay stack," one man was heard to say to another, apparently close by.

"And we are set to find a needle in the pottle of hay," replied his companion. "Why he may lurk here without our finding him all day."

"But if we find him we shall get a good reward," replied the first.

"Do not reckon upon that, or you will cheat yourself," said his companion, in a scoffing tone. "At the best, the reward is but a thousand marks. Then Sir John takes two tenths, and the captain one tenth, and the other head men two tenths more amongst them, so that there are but five hundred marks left for two hundred men, even if Catesby and his people were out of the way, and, depend upon

it, they'll share, so there wont be ten shillings a man."

"What a head you have for reckoning," said the other; "but go on. I wonder where in hell's name, we are going. Can you see the castle?"

"Not I," answered the other; "but we must follow this path to the end any way. There goes the horn that is to lead us."

And they seemed to proceed upon their way.

"Now forward," said the woodman, in a low voice; and moving rapidly on, they came to a large holly bush, which concealed the mouth of the little foot track they were following, from the very path which the soldiers had taken. Cutting straight across it, they entered a somewhat thinner and more open part of the wood, from which the castle was occasionally visible, so that any one above could have seen them without much difficulty; but it extended not far; and the danger was soon past.

"I know where we are now," said Iola, in a whisper. "We are close to the cell."

"Hush!" said the woodman. "Hush!" But the unfortunate piper, who was in the rear, stumbled over the root of a tree, and his pipes emitted a melancholy groan.

The woodman turned, and shook his fist at him; and the whole party halted to listen. No sound was heard however; and turning away to the right, by a gentle descent, they approached the spot where the forest stretched furthest into the valley.

"I will go forward and look out for a moment," said the woodman at length, speaking to Chartley in a low voice. "As ill luck would have it, I had the brushwood on the verge cut down last autumn, to prevent rascals lurking about there, little thinking I should need it myself;" and creeping on from bush to bush and tree to tree, he at length got a view along the whole side of the wood, fronting the slope on which the abbey stood. It was no pleasant sight that he beheld; for, at a distance of not more than a hundred and fifty yards apart, were stationed horsemen, watching every point

of the wood. With his right shoulder resting against a tree, and secured on the left by a thick holly, he remained for about a minute, carefully examining the proceedings of the soldiery. They moved not from the spots at which they had been placed; and the path which he had been hitherto following, wandering in and out amongst the trees upon the slope, passed at some little distance between two banks, till it reached the bottom of the descent, not a hundred and fifty yards from the little postern gate in the abbey wall, over which hung the bell profanely called, the Baby of St. Clare.

Boyd saw at once, from the distance at which the men were stationed, that there was a great chance of the whole party reaching the entrance of the lane between the two banks, before more than two of the soldiers could come up with them; and that if this were effected, Iola at least, was safe.

After finishing his contemplation quietly, the woodman returned to his party in the same

manner as he had left them, taking perhaps even greater precautions, and stooping almost to his knees, lest his great height should carry his head above the bushes. When he reached the others he commanded, rather than explained, saying—

"Now, all upon the path as fast as possible. Robin lead the way to the passage between the banks. Then follow me, wherever I go, and guard me from attack; let all the rest halt at the mouth of the lane, and keep it with a strong hand against pursuers. Now on! Quick, quick!"

"The whole party rushed forward, except the piper, (who remained under cover of the wood,) much in the same order as that in which they had hitherto proceeded. Iola was hurried on in the midst, with her heart beating and her head confused, yet gazing round from time to time, and catching with a quick and hurried glance the scene which immediately followed. She beheld the horsemen watching the forest; but till she had nearly reached the edge of the

woodland, the party, which bore her along amongst them, did not seem to attract any attention. Then, however, the two soldiers on each side put spurs to their horses, with a loud shout; and she felt herself instantly caught up in the arms of the woodman, carried along with extraordinary swiftness down the descent, and into the hollow between the two banks.

Iola gazed back over her bearer's shoulder; and the last sight she saw was the party of foresters occupying the mouth of the lane, while three or four armed horsemen were galloping upon them; and Chartley, with his drawn sword in his hand and the Arab beside him, stood a little in advance of his companions, as if to meet the soldiers at their first onset. They were close upon him; and with a painful shudder, she closed her eyes. When she opened them, the bank hid the scene from her view; and the next moment she heard the bell of the abbey ring sharply.

CHAPTER III.

"KEEP back, my men!" exclaimed Chartley, as the two first soldiers rode down towards him; "keep back, or the peril be upon your own heads."

The foremost of the pursuing party put his horn to his lips, and blew a loud, long blast, drawing up his horse at the same time.

"Yield you, yield you!" he exclaimed, turning then to the young nobleman; "'tis vain to resist. We have men enough to take you all, were you told ten times over."

"Call your officer then!" cried Chartley. "I yield not to a churl."

"Ay, and in the mean time, the others escape," cried the man; "that shall not be, by ——! Round, round! Over the banks," he continued, straining his voice to the utmost, to reach the ears of his companions, who were galloping down, "cut them off from the abbey!"

But the others did not hear or understand the cry, and rode on towards Chartley and the rest, whom they reached, just as Iola was borne to the postern gate.

"Hold back, sir!" shouted the young nobleman; "mark me, every one. I resist not lawful authority! But, marauders I will resist to the death. Show me a warrant—bring me an officer, and I yield at once, but not to men I know not.—As to those who are gone to the abbey, you can yourselves see, that they are but a lady and two of the foresters to guard her—"

"The lady is safe within the gates, noble sir," said one of the woodmen, speaking over his shoulder.

"Thank God for that!" cried Chartley.

"We are not seeking for women," answered the soldier, "but there are two men there; and we will know who they are."

"They are coming back. They are coming back," cried one of the men from behind.

The soldiers perceived the fact at the same moment; but there number was now becoming so great, one horseman riding down after another, that they seemed to meditate an attack upon the little pass which Chartley defended; and some of them rode up the bank, to take the party in the flank.

"Mark you well, good men," said the young nobleman, raising his voice to its highest tones. "If one stroke be struck, the consequences be upon your own heads. I refuse not to surrender to a proper warrant, or any officer of the king; but as a peer of England, I will not give up my sword to any simple soldier who asks it; and if I am attacked, I will defend myself to the uttermost."

"Halt, halt!" cried one of the men, who

seemed to have some command over the rest. "Ride away for Sir William Catesby. He is on the road just round the corner."

"There he comes, I think," cried another of the soldiers, pointing to a large party, riding at a rapid rate, down the course of the little stream.

"No, no," exclaimed the other. "I know not who those are. Quick, spurs to your horse, and away for Sir William. These may be companions we shall not like. He is round the corner of the wood, I tell you."

The man rode off at full speed; and the soldiers who were left, drew somewhat closer round the little party in the mouth of the lane, while one or two were detached to the right and left, to cut off the woodman and the man who had accompanied him, in case they endeavoured to escape on either side.

Boyd however, continued to walk slowly and quietly down from the abbey, towards the group he had left below, casting his eyes from one side to the other, and marking all that was

taking place, till at length, descending between the banks again, the scene upon the open ground, was shut out from his eyes, and he could only see his own foresters, Lord Chartley, and the party in front.

A few steps brought him to the side of the young nobleman; and he gazed at the ring of soldiers round the mouth of the lane, with a smile, saying,

"What do these gentlemen want?" and then added: "Here are your friends and servants, coming down from Hinckley, my lord, so if you have a mind to make a Thermopylæ of the lane, you may do it."

"Not I," answered Chartley. "Would to God, most learned woodman, that the time when Englishmen spill Englishmen's blood were at an end. Besides, I could not make it a Thermopylæ, for the only Orientals on the field are on my side;" and he glanced his eye to the good Arab, who stood gazing upon the scene, with his arms folded on his chest, apparently perfectly indifferent to all that was

taking place, but ready to strike whenever his master told him.

While this brief conversation was going on, the troop which had been seen coming down on the right, approached nearer and nearer; and at the same time, a gentleman followed by eight or ten horse, came up from the road which entered the wood opposite to the abbey green, riding at a light canter over the green sward that covered the hill side. The two parties reached the end of the lane, very nearly at the same moment; Catesby, indeed the first; and his shrewd, keen, plausible countenance, notwithstanding the habitual command which he possessed over its expressions, displayed some sort of trouble at seeing so large a body of men, over whom he had no controul.

"What is this, my good lord?" shouted Sir William Arden to Chartley, before Catesby could speak. "We got news of your jeopardy, strangely enough, and have come down at once to help you."

"I have ordered my knave to bring you a furred dressing gown, and a bottle of essence of maydew," cried Sir Edward Hungerford, with a light laugh; "supposing you must be cold, with your forest lodging, and your complexion sadly touched with the frosty air—But, what does the magnanimous Sir William Catesby do, cantering abroad at this hour of the morning? Beware of rheums, Sir William, beware of rheums! Don't you know that the early morning air is evil for the eyes, and makes a man short breathed?"

"This is no time for bantering, sirs," exclaimed Catesby. "Are you prepared to resist the royal authority? If so, I have but to order one blast upon a trumpet, and you will be surrounded by seven hundred men."

"We come to resist no lawful authority, but merely to help a friend," replied Sir William Arden; "and, in doing so, I care not much whose head I split, if it comes in my way."

"Peace, peace, Arden," cried Chartley. "Let

me answer him. What do you want with me, Sir William? and why am I assailed by your men, if they are yours, while peaceably pursuing my way?"

"Pooh, pooh, my lord," answered Catesby. "Do not assume unconsciousness. Where is the bishop? Will you give him up?—or, if you like it better, the friar who rode with you from Tamworth yesterday?"

"As for a bishop," answered Chartley, laughing, "I know of no bishops; and as for the friar, if he be a bishop, it is not my fault: I did not make him one. Friar I found him, and friar I left him. He remained behind, somewhat sick at the abbey."

"Then, what do you here, my lord?" demanded Catesby, "tarrying behind in the forest, while all your company have gone forward?"

"In truth, good Sir William," answered the young nobleman; "whenever I am brought to give an account of all my actions, you shall not be my father confessor. I will have a more

reverend man. But you have not yet answered my question ; why I am menaced here by these good gentlemen in steel jackets ?"

" You shall have an answer presently," replied Catesby ; and stooping down over his saddle bow, he conversed for a moment or two with one of the men who had been first upon the ground, and, who now stood dismounted by his side. Then raising his head again, he said : " There were three people left your company, my lord, a moment or two since. Two have returned, I am told, and one was received into the abbey. Who was that person ?"

" You must ask those who went with her," replied Chartley. " They have known her longer than I have, and can answer better. My acquaintance with her "—he added, as he saw a meaning smile come upon Sir Edward Hungerford's lip. " My acquaintance with her has been very short, and is very slight. I have acted, as was my devoir towards a lady, and have nought farther to say upon the subject."

"Then you would have me believe it was a woman," rejoined Catesby.

"Aye, was it, master," answered the woodman, standing forward and speaking in a rough tone; "or rather, as the lord says, a lady. She was sent out by the lady abbess, as the custom sometimes is, to the cell of St. Magdalene, there upon the hill; and when she would have gone back, she found the houses on the green in a flame, and all the wood surrounded by your soldiers. I wish I had known it in time, and I would have contrived to get her back again, in spite of all your plundering thieves. But the king shall know of all you have done, if I walk on foot to Leicester to tell him."

"If it was a lady, pray goodman, who was the lady?" demanded Sir Edward Hungerford, laughing lightly.

"What is that to you?" exclaimed the woodman, turning sharply upon him. "If she was a lady forsooth!—I might well say when I look at you, If you are a man, for of that

there may be some doubt; but nobody could look at her face, and ask if she were a lady."

A low laugh ran round, which heightened the colour in Sir Edward Hungerford's smooth cheek; but Catesby, after speaking again to the man beside him in a low tone, fixed his eyes upon the woodman, and demanded—

"Who are you, my good friend, who put yourself so forward?"

"I am head woodman of the abbey," answered Boyd, "and master forester; and by the charter of King Edward III. I am empowered to stop and turn back, or apprehend and imprison, any one whom I may find roaming the forest, except upon the public highway. I should have done so before this hour, if I had had force enough; for we have more vagabonds in the forest than I like. But I shall soon have bills and bows enough at my back; for I have sent to raise the country round. Such things as have been done this night, shall not happen within our meres, and go unpunished;"

and he crossed his arms upon his broad chest and gazed sternly in Catesby's face.

"Upon my life you are bold!" exclaimed Richard's favourite. "Do you know to whom you are speaking?"

"I neither know nor care," answered the woodman; "but I think I shall be able to describe you pretty well to the king; for he will not suffer you, nor any other leader of hired troops, to burn innocent men's houses and spoil the property of the church."

Catesby looked somewhat aghast; for the charge, he knew, put in such terms, would not be very palatable to Richard.

"I burnt no houses, knave," he said, with a scoff.

"'Tis the same thing if your men did," answered the woodman. "You are all of one herd, that is clear."

"Shall I strike the knave down, sir?" demanded one of the fierce soldiery.

"I should like to see thee try," said the

woodman, drawing his tremendous axe from his girdle; but Catesby exclaimed—

"Hold, hold!" and Chartley exclaimed—

"Well, sir, an answer to my question. We are but wasting time, and risking feud, by longer debating these matters here. For your conduct to others this night, for the destruction of the property of the church, and the wrongs inflicted on innocent men, either by your orders or with your connivance, you will of course be made responsible elsewhere; but I demand to know why I, a peer of England, going in peaceable guise, without weapons of war, am pursued and surrounded, I may say, by your soldiery?"

"That question is soon answered," replied Catesby. "I might indeed say, that no one could tell that you were a peer of England when you were found a-foot walking with foresters, and such like people, below your own degree. But in one word, my lord, I am ordered to apprehend your lordship, for aiding and comforting a proclaimed traitor. Do you

surrender to the king's authority? Or must I summon a sufficient force to compel obedience?"

"I surrender at once, of course, to the king's authority," answered Chartley; "and knowing, Sir William, your place and favour with the king, will not even demand to see the warrant. But I trust my servants will be allowed to ride with me to Leicester, where I appeal the immediate consideration of my case to the king himself."

"So be it, my lord," answered Catesby; "but if I might advise for your own good, you would not bring so many men with badges of livery under the king's eyes; for you know the law upon that subject, and that such displays are strictly prohibited."

Chartley laughed.

"Good faith!" he said. "I am not the thoughtless boy you take me for, Sir William. I have a license under king Edward's hand for these same badges and liveries, which has

never been revoked. Methinks it will pass good even now."

"Be it as you will, my lord," replied Catesby. "I advised you but as a friend. Nay, more: if you can find any other gentleman to be bound with you for your appearance at Leicester, within three days, I will take your lordship's parole to deliver yourself in that city to the king's will. I do not wish to pass any indignity upon a gentleman of worth, though lacking somewhat of discretion mayhap."

"I'll be his bail," cried Sir William Arden at once. "I am a fool perhaps for my pains, as he indeed is a fool who is bail for any man; but the lad won't break his word, although leg bail is the best bail that he could have, or any one indeed, in this good kingdom of England, where accusations are received as proofs, and have been for the last thirty years, whichever house was on the throne. There was nought to choose between them in that respect."

"You should be more careful, Sir William," answered Catesby with a grim smile. "The house which is on the throne, is always the best. However I take your pledge, and that of Lord Chartley; and now I will back to my post, taking it for granted, my lord, that this was really a woman who was with you, and that even in such a case as this, a lie would not sully your lips."

"I am not a politician, Sir William," replied Chartley, somewhat bitterly; "so I have no excuse for lying. The person who just now entered the abbey was a lady, seemingly not twenty years of age; and I pledge you my word of honour, that her chin never bore a beard, nor her head received the tonsure, so that she is neither man, friar, nor bishop."

"Give you good day, then," said Catesby; and turning his horse he rode away, followed by the soldiers who resumed their post around the wood.

"There goes a knave," said the woodman aloud, as Richard's favourite trotted down the

slope. Had it not needed two or three men to guard you, my good lord, your parole would have been little worth in the Cat's eyes."

"On my life, Boyd, you had better beware of him," rejoined Lord Chartley. "He does not easily forgive; and you have spoken somewhat plainly."

"Humph! I have not been the only one to speak my mind this day," said the woodman. "I did not think there was anything in the shape of a lord, at the court of England, who would venture to show such scorn for a minion—unless he was on the eve of falling."

"No hope of such a thing in this case," answered Chartley; "he is too serviceable to be dispensed with. But now I must have my horse. By good fortune, 'tis on the other side of the wood; so they will let us get it without taking it for a bishop."

"And who is this bishop they are seeking?" asked Sir William Arden, as he walked down on foot at Chartley's side, by a somewhat circuitous path, to the cottage of the woodman.

"The only bishop whose name is proclaimed," replied Chartley, avoiding a direct answer to the question; "is Doctor Morton, bishop of Ely; but I trust and believe that he is far out of their reach. However, I would have you take care, Boyd," he continued, turning towards the woodman, who was following; "and, if you should meet with the bishop in the wood, give him no help; for these men will visit it savagely on the head of any one against whom they can prove the having succoured him.—I would fain hear how this hunting ends," he continued; "for I have seldom seen such a curious chace. Can you not give me intimation at Leicester?"

"And pray add," continued Sir Edward Hungerford, in a low tone, "some information concerning the sweet Lady Iola. Her beautiful eyes," he added, as Chartley turned somewhat sharply towards him, "have haunted me all night, like a melodious song which dwells in our ears for days after we have heard it."

"Or a bottle of essence," said the woodman,

"that makes a man smell like a civet cat for months after it is expended."

"Drown me all puppies," exclaimed Arden. "A young cat that goes straying about with her eyes but half open, and her weak legs far apart, is more tolerable than one of these orange flowers of the court, with their smart sayings, which they mistake for wit;" and imitating, not amiss, the peculiar mode of talking of Hungerford and his class, he went on, "Gad ye good den, my noble lord! Fore Heaven, a pretty suit, and well devised, but that the exceeding quaintness of the trimming is worthy of a more marvellous furniture.—Pshaw! I am sick of their mewing; and if we have not a war soon, to mow down some of these weeds, the land will be full of nettles."

"Take care they don't sting, Arden," said Sir Edward Hungerford.

The other knight looked at him from head to foot, and walked on after Lord Chartley, with a slight smile curling his lip.

The party met no impediment on the way to

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the woodman's cottage. Chartley's horses were soon brought forth; and after lingering for a moment, to add a private word or two to Boyd, the young nobleman prepared to mount. Before he did so, however, he took the woodman's hand and shook it warmly, much to the surprise of Sir Edward Hungerford; and then the whole company resumed the road to Hinckley, passing a number of the patroles round the wood as they went, and hearing shouts and cries and notes upon the horn, which only called a smile upon Chartley's lips.

When they had passed the wood, however, and were riding on through the open country, Sir Edward Hungerford fell somewhat behind, to talk with a household tailor, whom he entertained, upon the device of a new sort of hose, which he intended to introduce; while Sir William Arden, naturally a taciturn man, rode on by Chartley's side, almost in silence. The young nobleman himself was now very grave. The excitement was over. All that had passed that night, belonged to the past. It was a

picture hung up in the gallery of memory ; and he looked upon the various images it contained, as one does upon the portraits of dead friends. He saw Iola, as she had sat beside him at the abbey in gay security. He felt the trembling of her hand upon his arm, in the hour of danger. Her cheek seemed to rest upon his shoulder again, as it had done, when, weary and exhausted, she had slept overpowered by slumber. Her balmy breath seemed once more to fan his cheek. The time since he had first known her was but very short ; but yet he felt that it had been too long for him. That, in that brief space, things had been born that die not—New sensations—Immortal offspring of the heart—Children of fate that live along with us on earth, and go with us to immortality.

"She cannot be mine," he thought. "She is plighted to another whom she knows not—loves not." He would fain have recalled those hours. He would fain have wiped out the sensations they had produced. He resolved to try—to think of other things—to forget—to be

what he had been before. Vain, vain hopes and expectations! Alas, he sought an impossibility. No one can ever be what he was before. Each act of life changes the man—takes something, gives something—leaves him different from what he was. He may alter; but he cannot go back. What he was is a memory, and never can be a reality again; and more especially is this the case with the light careless heart of youth. Pluck a ripe plum from the tree—touch it as tenderly as you will; the bloom is wiped away; and, try all the arts you can, you can never restore that bloom again, nor give the fruit the hue it had before. Happy those buoyant and successful spirits who can look onward at every step, from life's commencement to its close, and are never called upon to sit down by the weary way side of being, and long for the fair fields and meadows they have passed, never to behold again.

CHAPTER IV.

Clouds roll over the sky; the large rain drops descend; the lightning flashes; the thunder rolls along the verge of heaven; darkness and tempests rage above; and ruin and desolation seem to reign below. They have their hour, and pass away. Often the clouds roll on to some distant bourn, leaving the sky clear, the sun smiling brighter than ever, the blades of grass gemmed with the diamond drops, the earth all fresh, and the birds all singing. But there are other times, when, although the fierceness of the tempest is over, the streaming deluge

suspended, the torch of the lightning quenched, and the angry voice of the thunder hushed, a heavy boding cloud remains behind, hiding the brightness of the face of Heaven, and threatening fresh storms to come.

Thus it is too with the human heart. In the spring-tide of our life—in those gay early years, when the merry rays of the sunshiny heart dance gleam-like with the storms and clouds of life, the tempest of passion or of sorrow is soon swept away; and the universe of the heart resumes its brightness. But there comes a time when the storm falling upon life's decline—I speak not of mere years, but at the epoch of each man's destined change—the spirit cannot cast off the shadow of the cloud, even when the eyes are dried, and the lightning pang of anguish or the terror speaking thunder of retribution are staid for the hour.

Thus was it with Richard. His son, his only son, his beloved, was gone. The fountain of hope and expectation was dried up. For

him, and for his future destiny, he had laboured, and thought, and striven, and calculated, and sinned, and offended God and man, and won a dark and fearful renown, tainted a mother's fame, violated trust and friendship, usurped the patrimony of the orphan, spurned every tie of nature and affection, trampled upon gratitude, and imbrued his hands in blood. Strange that the brightest and the purest of human affections, when mingled in our nature with the darker and the more violent passions, instead of mitigating their influence, should prompt to deeper crimes, and plunge us into more overwhelming guiltiness—as the most precious medicines, mingled chymically with some foreign matter, will, in a moment, become the most dangerous poisons. He was gone; the object of all his fond imaginings, his daily labours and his nightly thoughts. The hopes that had been built up upon his life were all thrown down. The line between the present and the future was snapped asunder. The pang had been suffered—the terrible pang of

the rending of a strong manly heart from its closest ties, and its dearest expectations. The effect had been awful, terrible. It had for a time unseated reason from a throne where she had ruled with sway almost despotic. But that pang had been conquered. Reason had regained her rule. The tempest of the heart had passed away, and had left the sky calm—but not bright. No! Dull, dull, heavy, leaden, threatening, was the aspect of all around. The pure light of day was extinguished, never to dawn for him again; and all the light that was left, came from the dull torch of ambition.

Richard sat in the room of the royal lodging at Leicester, where we have before seen him. There was a gentleman by his side, with head slightly bent, reading, from a long slip of paper, some notes of all the different pieces of intelligence which had been received during the day.

"What next?" demanded the king, in a dull and almost inattentive tone.

"The letter which your grace proposed to

write to your royal sister-in-law," replied the gentleman.

Richard started, "Ay," he said, thoughtfully; "Ay. It must be done;" and rubbing his temple gently with the fingers of his right hand, he seemed to give himself up to meditation. After a short space of time, it would appear, he partly forgotten, if I may use such a term, the presence of another; and he murmured words to himself, which he might not have done had he been acutely conscious that they were overheard. "Shall the son of Clarence succeed?" he asked himself, in a long gloomy tone: "for him have I done all these things?—To make him King of England? That fair inheritance, for which I have toiled and laboured, and thought, and desired, and watched by night, and acted by day, shall it be his?—No, no! And yet there is a fate that overrules man's policy, and thwarts his best devised schemes.—No child for me, if Ann lives; and it all goes to another race.—What then?" And he paused, and thought once more very deeply.

The busy movements of his mind during that reverie, who shall scrutinize? But at length he said: "No, no! She was the love of my youth, the partner of my early cares and joys.—No! Grief will soon do its work on her. She is of that soft and fragile hearted nature, which crumbles at the first rude touch, like the brittle sandstone. I am of granite, which the chisel may mark, but which no saw will touch—hard and perdurable. We must bide the event. The canker is on the frail flower, and it will fall soon enough! In the mean time, 'tis well to be prepared;" and, turning to the man beside him, he added, "I will write that letter with my own hand. Have a post ready by six this evening. What next?"

"The young Lord Chartley waits your grace's will, in ward," replied the secretary; and, seeing that Richard seemed plunged in thought again, he added, "suspected of aiding the escape of Morton, bishop of Ely."

"Ha!" cried Richard, with an angry start;

"he shall ——." But he paused suddenly, laid his hand upon his brow for a moment or two, and then added in a calmer tone, "No. He is a foolish boy. This man was his tutor. We love those who were the guides and conductors of our youth. But I will make sure of him. Give me those letters—No, not those, the packet on the left;" and, having received what he demanded, he examined the despatches carefully, and then said, "What next?"

The secretary looked at the paper in his hand, and then replied:

"Arnold Lord Calverly craves your highness's gracious sanction, to complete the marriage already contracted between his niece, the Lady Iola St. Leger, and the Lord Fulmer. He craves audience on this score, and is, I believe, even now in the great hall below."

Richard meditated for a moment or two.

"He is a stanch and steady friend," he said at length; "and yet, this Lord Fulmer—I love him not. I doubt him. He is a man of high toned fantasies, and grave imaginations—move-

able with the wind of passion, and notions of what he believes fine thoughts. I love not your men of emotions. Give me the man of firm, calm deeds, who sets a mighty object before him, and cleaves a way to it through all impediments. The inheritance is large; his own power, great: united, they may be dangerous. But we must temporise and see. 'Tis wise to keep expectation on the wing. When we have given all, we have no more to give; and, by St. Paul, gratitude is a poor bond, compared with desire.—But I must see the Lord Calverly. Go, give him admission. We will hear the rest afterwards."

The secretary departed; and Richard remained with his brow resting on his hand, till a door again opened, and a stout, elderly gentleman was admitted, with an expression of countenance indicating no slight opinion of his own importance, but no very great profundity of intellect. The king instantly rose, and took him by the hand.

"Welcome, welcome, my noble lord," he

said. "You have come to me at a moment of deep grief and pain; but, your presence is none the less acceptable, as indeed, what can afford greater consolation than the society of a true friend?"

The cordiality with which he was received, might have surprised any other person, than Arnold Lord Calverly; for Richard was not a man of a cordial nature, and displayed little warmth of manner, to any but his mere familiar tools, or to those whom he intended to deceive or to destroy. The worthy lord, however, was quite satisfied, that he deserved the utmost kindness and consideration; and taking it for granted that the monarch really received him joyfully, he proceeded to comfort him with such common places, as men of inferior intellect mistake for as the dicta of wisdom.

"Alack, my lord the king," he said, "you have indeed, suffered a great deprivation. But, you know, this is merely to share the common fate of all men, from which the king is no more exempt than the peasant. Death respects not

the young or the old, the high or the low. We are all subject to his power; and perhaps, those he takes soonest are the happiest. I would have your highness consider what a troublous life it is, that man leads here below; and, how many sorrows the young prince, God rest his soul, may have escaped; and in your own knowledge of life, you will find consolation for his having lost it."

"True, very true," replied Richard, with a grave and thoughtful look. "That is sound philosophy, my dear lord, as indeed is all that you say on all occasions. Yet one cannot help regretting, if not the poor boy's release from earthly suffering, at least the extinction of one's own succession, especially where a crown is a part of the heritage."

"Nay, now, sire; in this you judge not altogether wisely," replied the old nobleman. "Pardon my boldness in so speaking. But, why should a man desire to transmit his possessions to a child of his own, rather than to the child of any other man. I speak in the abstract, mark

me—I speak in the abstract—for, if a man have children of his own, of course he would rather that they succeeded. That's very natural. But if he have none, why should he desire posterity? His eyes must be closed, before his child can take the succession. He cannot therefore see the enjoyment of it by his child."

"Very true," said Richard. "Very true."

"Besides," continued Lord Calverly, "we cannot tell that our children will use what we leave them, better than the children of other men. It is but a prejudice, my lord the king, to wish for posterity; and indeed, I am inclined to think that those men are happiest who have never had any children."

"If they have minds so full of philosophy as yours, my lord," answered Richard; "and you can judge well, for you are yourself childless, and yet happy in yourself."

"Perfectly, your highness," replied Lord Calverly. "I would not change with a patriarch. Indeed, the presence of children and our love for them, often betrays us into dan-

gerous weaknesses, against which we should guard with care, if Heaven should inflict them on us. I have been always watchful—very watchful, your highness, against such foibles. Even in the case of my niece, my poor brother's child, who was left to my charge and guidance a mere infant; as soon as I found I was becoming too fond of her, and that, when she was well I was too careful of her, when she was ill I thought too much about her, I sent her away at once to my sister, the abbess of St. Clare. Women's minds being weak, cannot be injured by such softnesses; but they suit ill with a philosopher, a soldier, or a statesman. But it is upon this subject, that I came to speak with your highness."

"What, regarding the abbess of St. Clare?" said Richard, with a start.

"Of her presently," replied Lord Calverly; "but, first of my niece. I wish to crave your highness's permission to complete the marriage of this little Iola with my friend, and the son of my friend, Arthur Lord Fulmer."

"You shall have it right willingly," replied Richard, in the frankest tone possible. "It shall be drawn out in due form, and receive our own sign manual. Can I refuse anything to so tried a friend?—Nevertheless, my most dear lord, I will beseech you, not to proceed hastily," he continued with a significant nod of the head. Delay the marriage a little, at my request. We would be present at it ourselves, I and the queen; and moreover, I have intentions—I have intentions ——"

He paused, looking in Lord Calverly's face, with a bland smile, and then added: "Who knows what name you may be called upon to write, my lord? It may not be Calverly then. Coronets will change their forms sometimes; and we do not bind our brows always with the same cap—Delay a little, delay a little! At the present moment, sad thoughts possess me; and I have not your philosophy to combat them. There are many important matters to do. The succession to the crown must be settled; and we shall need all your wise counsels, in graver

things than marriages and merrymakings—Delay a little, delay a little, my right good friend."

"Your highness is too gracious," replied Lord Calverly, with a shining and radiant look. "Your commands are law; but there is one other subject I must bring before you, a matter touching your royal throne and dignity."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Richard. "What may that be?"

"All men know, my royal lord," said the old nobleman, in an oratorical tone, "that your highness's devout reverence for the church is not to be questioned, that religion, as one may say, is not in you as in other men, a matter acquired by mere learning and meditation, but a part and principle of your own royal nature. Now my sister, the abbess of St. Clare of Atherston, whose conduct in her high charge has deserved and received the praises of all men, and especially of our holy father, has commissioned me to state to your highness, the fact, that the abbey—an abbey of nuns be it

remembered, filled with young and delicate women, vowed to seclusion and prayer—was surrounded on the night of Wednesday last by a body of rude soldiery, under the command of one Sir John Godscroft, who, upon pretence of seeking for a deserter, insisted upon admission, notwithstanding her warning that the place was sanctuary. The whole building was searched; and not only that, but the priest's house and many of the cottages on the green, belonging to the servitors of the abbey, were burned to the ground."

Richard's brow grew as black as night; and, setting his teeth hard together, he rose and walked up and down the room, muttering to himself—

"This must be repressed. This must be repressed."

"Let your highness conceive," persisted Lord Calverly, following him a step or two behind, "only conceive what a condition these poor nuns were in, roused out of bed by these rude men, in the middle of the night."

A grim smile came upon the king's handsome face; and he replied—

"Gray gowns are soon put on, my lord. Nevertheless this shall be looked into severely —Ha! Let me see—The abbey of St. Clare;" and, taking some papers from the table, he ran his eye hastily over them, and then exclaimed, with a frowning brow, "It is so! 'Twas not a deserter whom they sought, my lord, but a traitor;—no pitiful trooper fled from his colours, but Morton, bishop of Ely, the instigator of Buckingham, the counsellor of Dorset, the friend and confidant of Richmond."

"But, my lord the king, the abbey is sanctuary," replied Lord Calverly; "and —"

"Were it God's altar, with his hand upon the horn, I would tear that man from it," thundered Richard, his whole countenance working with passion.

The moment after he cast himself into his chair, and covered his eyes with his hands, while the pompous old nobleman stood as one thunderstruck before him. After a dead silence

of nearly a minute, the king looked up again; and the cloud had passed away from his brow.

"I have been moved, my lord," he said. "I have been moved. This man, this Morton, is my deadliest enemy, a reviler, a calumniator, the stirrer of every trouble in the realm; and he has escaped me. Doubtless it was not your good sister's fault; and even if it were, these men have exceeded their commission. I will have no such acts of violence within this kingdom. Rich and poor, strong and weak, shall know that the sword of justice is not trusted to my hands in vain. Nor will I suffer my name and my service to be used as pretexts for acts so criminal—It shall be inquired into and justice done."

He paused, casting down his eyes; and Lord Calverly, frightened out of his wits at the storm he had raised, was retreating towards the door, when Richard called him again, saying—

"Stay, stay. I may have a charge to give you, my good lord. A very noble gentleman

brought up in the court—I may say under my own eye—has somewhat failed in his duty. To what extent I know not yet. I would fain not deal with him harshly ; for he is young and rash, and lately come from foreign lands, so that he may not know the full extent of his fault. I will examine him however in your presence. If I find he has acted with malignant purpose, he shall go to York for trial. If it be but a rash prank of youth he has committed, although it galled me somewhat closely, I will place him in your lordship's ward, assigning you one third of his revenues while he remains there."

As he spoke he rose, and called in one of the attendants, saying briefly—

"Summon Lord Chartley hither."

"I trust he may clear himself in your highness's opinion," said Lord Calverly, while the attendant proceeded to obey the king's commands. "I have heard him highly spoken of as one more than ordinarily learned, and a complete master of exercises. Good Lord, I

have often patted his head as a boy ; and such a curly head as it was too, all wavy and silky, like a Spanish dog's. I little thought it would be filled with philosophy."

"Perhaps some slipped in from the tips of your fingers," said Richard, with a slightly sarcastic smile ; and in a moment or two after the door of the cabinet opened.

With a free light step, though a somewhat grave countenance for him, Chartley entered the king's presence, and advanced to the side of the table, opposite to that at which Richard was placed. The king gazed at him, not sternly, but with that fixed, attentive, unwinking eye, which is very difficult for conscious guilt to bear.

Nevertheless, Chartley sustained it firmly ; and, after maintaining silence for a full minute, with his lips compressed, Richard said—

"I have sent for you, my lord, because there are heavy charges against you."

"Will your highness state them?" said the

young nobleman. "I will answer them at once boldly and truly."

"I will," answered Richard. "The first is —and all the rest are secondary to that—that you have aided and comforted, contrary to our proclamation, a known and avowed traitor, Morton, bishop of Ely, that you took him in your train disguised as a friar, and carried him with you from Tamworth to the abbey of St. Clare of Atherston, for the purpose of facilitating his escape, well knowing him to be a traitor. How say you? Is this charge true?"

"In part, my lord the king," replied Chartley; "but in part also it is false."

"In what part," demanded Richard.

"In that part which alleges I knew him to be a traitor," replied Chartley, "and in that which implies that I had seen and did know your royal proclamation. I never saw it, nor knew the terms thereof, till yesterday; nor did I know or believe that the bishop was a traitor. Yet let me not say one word that can de-

ceive. I was well aware that he had incurred your highness' displeasure; but on what grounds I was not informed."

"And, knowing it, you aided his escape?" said Richard sternly.

"I did, my lord," replied Chartley; "but, if you will hear me speak a few words, I may say something in my own excuse. I never gave you cause before, wittingly or willingly, to doubt my loyalty. I have trafficked with none of your personal enemies, nor with those of your royal estate. I have taken no part in plots or conspiracies; but this was a very different case. I found the friend, the guide, the instructor of my youth, flying from danger; and my first thought was to succour him. I know, my lord the king, that I have put my head in peril by so doing; but what man would consider such peril to save a father? and this man I looked upon as a second father. I will ask you, sire, if you would not have done a hundred times as much, to rescue the noble duke of York?—I loved Morton as much."

He touched upon a tender point—perhaps the only really tender point in Richard's heart. There are spots in the waste of memory ever green—according to the beautiful figure of the poet—oases in the desert of life. The burning sun of ambition cannot parch them, the nipping frost of eager avarice cannot wither them. The palm tree of early affection shades them for ever; the refreshing fountains of first love keep them ever verdant. They are few with most men; for all bright and beautiful things are few; but rarely is there a heart so rugged in its nature, so scorched by earthly passion, or so faded from dull indulgence, as not to have one (if not more) of those spots of brightness, which, when the eye of remembrance lights upon it, refreshes the spirit with a vision of the sweet calm joys of youth. The memory of his great father, and of the love which he had borne him, was the purest, perhaps, the only pure thing for Richard, in all the treasury of the past; and he felt the allusion with sensations, such as he had not experienced for many

a long year. They were tender, deep, almost too deep; and, turning away his head, he stretched out his hand with a gesture, which seemed to command the speaker to stop.

"Pardon me, your highness," said Chartley, seeing the emotions he had aroused, and then was silent.

Richard remained musing for several minutes. His mind was busy with the past; but he had the peculiar faculty of all great and resolute spirits, that of casting from him rapidly all impressions but those of the present. He looked up again; and it was evident that the emotion was at an end. Still it would seem that it had produced some effect in its passage, for his next words were in a milder tone.

"I am willing, my lord," he said, "to believe that you have acted indiscreetly, but without evil intentions. I will make allowance for youth, and for affection; but still, this must not go altogether unpunished. Are you willing to abide by my decision?"

"Needs must, my lord the king," replied

Chartley, almost gaily. "I am in your hand; and it is a strong one."

"Nay!" answered the king. "You have a choice, if you like it better. I can send you for trial by your peers."

"Good faith, no!" cried Chartley. "That were worse a thousand-fold. In a word, sire, I know my danger. Ignorance, youth, friendship, were no defence before the stubborn rigour of the law. You have the power to mitigate it, and, I believe, the heart. I leave my cause with you."

"Well then," said Richard, "by St. Paul, you shall not have cause to repent. As you have put yourself in the king's will, we will put you in ward with this noble lord, till our further pleasure; assigning him one third of your revenues, for the guard and maintenance of your person, and making him responsible to us for your conduct. He will not deal harshly with you, methinks. Does this satisfy you?"

"Since better may not be, my lord," replied Chartley. "I would as gladly be in the hand

of this noble lord, who, if my memory fail me not, is the Lord Calverly, as any one. Give a bird the choice, whether you shall put it in a gilded cage or wring its neck, and doubtless it will prefer the wires; and yet it can scarcely be said to be satisfied, when it would fain use its wings in freedom, though for no evil purpose."

"I seek not that his imprisonment be very strict, my lord," said Richard, turning to Lord Calverly. "You will take such securities as you judge needful, but do nought with rigour; for, even by the light way in which he fronts his danger, one may judge that he did what he has done, in careless ignorance rather than in malice.—Now take him with you, and bestow him as you think fit."

"Ay, young heads are too hot for cool judgment," said Lord Calverly, as they walked towards the door. "It is a marvel to me, how boys ever grow men, and how men ever reach maturity; for, not contented with the perils of

life, they are always making new dangers for themselves."

"Stay," cried Richard. "Stay! There is yet one question I would ask before you go, Lord Chartley. Was the abbess of St. Clare privy to your bringing this turbulent bishop within her walls? I hear you sent forward a messenger."

The question was a perilous one; but Chartley fixed upon the latter words of the king for his reply, and thus avoided the danger. "My messenger bore a letter, your highness," he answered, "which letter the abbess doubtless still has and can show you. You will there see, that I only told her, I was coming to crave her hospitality with some friends. The bishop I presented to her, as a friar travelling with my train. Nor was there one amongst the friends who were with me, nor amongst my servants, who was made aware of our companion's quality. There is a proverb, very old, that fine feathers make fine birds; and I do not believe

that any one saw the bishop's robe through the gray friar's gown."

Richard smiled, thinking of Sir Charles Weinants, but bowed his head in signal of the conference being ended; and the two noblemen withdrew together.

CHAPTER V.

I know not whether the architecture of the middle ages—that peculiar architecture I mean, which existed in different varieties in England, from a little before the commencement of the reign of the Conqueror, till the end of the reign of Henry VII.—can be said to have advanced or retrograded from the time of Edward III. to the time of Richard. Every one will judge according to his particular tastes of the merits of the style; but one thing is certain, that, although the houses of the lower orders had remained much the same, the domestic arrangement

of the baronial residences had greatly improved. Notwithstanding that long period of contention, which succeeded the accession of Henry VI., notwithstanding constant wars and the frequent summons to the field, men seemed to have looked for comfort, in the laying out of their dwellings; and the feudal castle, although still a castle, and well fitted for defence, contained in it many of the conveniences of a modern house. Perhaps it was, that the struggle of great parties had taken the place of private quarrels between the great barons themselves and struggles between mere individual conspirators and the crown. Thus, great towns were attacked more frequently than fortified mansions; and, during this period, we meet with very few instances of a simple baronial fortress being subjected to siege.

However that might be, the chambers in a great nobleman's house, the halls, the lodging chambers, the ladies' bower, were now all more commodious, light, and airy, than at that former

period of few, small, narrow and deep windows, when light and air were excluded, as well as the missiles of an enemy. Not only in monastery, convent, and college, but even in private dwellings, the large oriel was seen here and there, suffering the beams of day to pour freely into the hall, and casting the lines of its delicate tracery upon the floor; and, raised somewhat above the general level of the room, approached by two steps, and furnished with window seats, it afforded a pleasant and sun-shiny sitting place to the elder and younger members of the family.

There was one of these oriel windows in the lesser hall of Chidlow castle; and round the raised platform, within the sort of bay which it formed, ran a sort of bench or window seat of carved oak, covered with a loose cushion of crimson velvet. The lattice was open; and soft air and bright light streamed in. The winter had been remarkably long and severe. The snow had lain upon the ground, till the end of March; and, even then, when

one bright day had succeeded, and withdrawn the white covering of the earth, it was only to be followed by a week or ten days of sharp frost, which reigned in its full rigour during some of the events which we have narrated in the previous chapters. Now, however, winter had departed, and spring commenced with that sudden and rapid transition, which is often the case in more northern countries, and is sometimes seen even in England. The air, as I have said, was soft and genial; the blue skies were hardly chequered by a fleecy cloud; the birds were singing in the trees; the red buds were bursting with the long checked sap; and snowdrop and violet, seemed running races with the primrose and the anemone, to catch the first smile of their sweet mother spring. The little twining shrubs were already green with their young leaves; and the honey-suckle strove hard to cast a verdant mantle over the naked brown limbs of the tall trees which it had climbed. The scene from the lattice of the oriel window was one of these fair English

landscapes on which the eye loves to rest; for the castle was situated upon a height; and below, spread out a rich and beautiful country, waving in long lines of meadow and wood, for fifteen or sixteen miles, till sloping uplands towered into high hills, which glowed with a peculiarly yellow light, never seen anywhere, that I know of, beyond the limits of this island. Gazing from that lattice, over that scene, sat two young and beautiful girls, with whom the reader is already acquainted. Very different, it is true, was their garb from that in which they were first presented to you whose eye rests upon this page; for the more simple garments of the convent had given place to to the splendid costume of the court of that time; and the forms, which required no ornament, were half hidden in lace and embroidery. But there was still the beautiful face of Iola, with the bright beaming expression, which seemed to pour forth hope and joy in every look, but now somewhat shaded with a cloud of care; and there, the not less fair, though some-

what more thoughtful, countenance of her cousin Constance, with her deep feeling eyes poring over the far prospect, and seeming to search for something, through the thin summer mist that softened all the features of the landscape.

They were both very silent, and evidently busied with their own thoughts. Some attendants passed across the hall, and others lingered, to arrange this or that article of furniture. Others entered to speak with them; and the two girls, from time to time, turned an inquiring look at those who came and went, showing that they were in some sort strangers in the home of their fathers.

At length, the hall was cleared of all but themselves; and Constance said in a low voice, "I wish, dear cousin, that my aunt would come. We should not then feel so desolate. I think our good lord and uncle might have left us at the abbey till he was at home himself."

"He would not have made the place much more cheerful," answered Iola, with a faint smile; "for wisdom is a very melancholy thing,

dear Constance: at least if it be always like his. I fear me too, even my good merry aunt would not make this place feel anything but desolate to me, just at present. She might cheer and support me a little, it is true; but I have got terrible dreams of the future, Constance. I try not to think of them, but they will come."

She paused and bent down her eyes, in what seemed painful meditation; and Constance replied, in a gentle tone, saying: "Why, how is this, Iola! You used not to look upon the matter so seriously."

"Alack, it gets very bad as it comes near," answered Iola, with an uncheerful laugh. "It is something very like being sold for a slave, Constance. However, the poor slave cannot help himself, nor I either, so do not let us talk any more about it. I suppose I shall soon see my purchaser. I wonder what he is like. Do you recollect whether he is white or black?"

"Good faith, not I," answered Constance; "but he is not quite a negro, I suppose. I have heard people say he was a pretty boy."

"A pretty boy!" cried Iola, raising her eyebrows. "Heaven defend me! What will become of me if I am married to a pretty boy? Somewhat like Sir Edward Hungerford, I suppose, lisping lamentable nonsense about essences, and bestowing his best thoughts upon his tailor."

"Nay, nay! Why should you conjure up such fancies?" said Constance. "You seem resolved to dislike him without cause."

"Nature, dear cousin," said Iola. "Nature and the pig's prerogative, to dislike any road we are forced to travel. Yet, it is bad policy, I will admit; and I will try to shake it off, and to like him to the best of my ability. The time is coming fast when I must, whether I will or not; for I think the oath I am about to take is to love him. I do think it is very hard, that women should not be allowed to choose for themselves, and yet be forced to take an oath which they do not know whether they can keep or not. Well, the worst of all the seven sacraments is matrimony, to my mind.

Extreme unction is a joke to it—how can I tell that I shall love him? I don't think I can; and yet I must swear I will."

"You are making a rack of your own fancy," said Constance. "Wait till you have seen him at least, Iola; for, after all, you may find him the very man of your own heart."

Iola started, and then shook her head mournfully, saying, "of my own heart? Oh, no!"

Constance gazed at her in surprise; and for the first time a suspicion of the truth crossed her mind. She said not a word, however, of her doubts, but resolved to watch narrowly, with that kind and eager affection which two girls brought up from youth together often feel for each other, where no rivalry has ever mingled its bitter drop with the sweet current of kindred love. She changed the subject of conversation too, pointing to some towers in the distance, and saying, "I wonder whose castle that is."

"Middleham, I dare say," answered Iola, in an absent tone. "It is somewhere out there—

but yet it cannot be Middleham either. Middleham is too far."

"There is something moving upon that road which we see going along the side of the hill," said Constance. "I dare say it is my uncle and his train."

"No, no, Leicester lies out there," answered Iola; "you never can find out the country, dear cousin; and I learn it all in a minute, like the leaf of a book. I dare say it is some wild lord, riding to hawk or to hunt. Heaven send it be not my falcon, just towering to strike me before my uncle comes. I'll not look at them. They seem coming this way;" and she turned from the window and went down the steps, seating herself upon the lower one, and resting her cheek upon her hand.

Constance did watch the approaching party, however, till it became evident that those whom she saw were coming direct towards the castle. They were now seen and now lost among the trees and hedges; but every time they reappeared they were nearer.

At length Constance turned her eyes to Iola, and said, "they are coming hither, whoever they are; and my uncle is certainly not one of the party. They are only five or six in all, and seem young men. Had we not better go away to our own chamber?"

"No," answered Iola, starting up. "I will stay and face them. Something seems to tell me, that I know who is coming You shall see how well I can behave, Constance, wild as you think me, and untutored in the world's ways as I am."

"They may be mere strangers after all," said Constance; "but here they are; for I can hear the dull sound of their horses' feet upon the drawbridge."

Iola sprang up the steps again with a light step, and twined her arm in that of her cousin. Both movements were very natural. We always like to stand upon a height when we meet those of whom we have any fear or any doubt; and Iola felt the need of sympathy which the very touch of her cousin's arm afforded her. A pause

followed, during which Constance sought to say something and to look unconcerned; but words she found not; and her eyes as well as Iola's, remained fixed upon the door. At length it opened; and, preceded by one of the officers of the castle, but unannounced by him, two gentlemen entered with a quick step. One was instantly recognized by both the fair girls who stood in the oriel, as Sir Edward Hungerford. The other was a stranger to them both. He was a dark, handsome looking young man, of some two or three and twenty years of age, dressed in a somewhat of a foreign fashion, which, had they been much acquainted with such matters, they would have perceived at once to be the mode of the Burgundian court; but Iola's eye rested not upon his dress. It was his face that she scanned; and Constance felt a sort of shudder pass over her cousin's frame, as she leaned upon her arm, which pained and grieved her much. She saw nothing disagreeable, nothing to dislike in the countenance or air of the stranger. His step was free and graceful, his carriage dignified and

lordly, his look, though perhaps a little haughty, was open and frank. In fact he was a man well calculated to please a lady's eye; and again Constance said to herself—"There must be some other attachment."

The stranger came on at an equal pace with Sir Edward Hungerford; but it was the latter who first spoke.

"Permit me," he said, "dear ladies, to be lord of the ceremonies, and introduce to you both, my noble friend Arthur, Lord Fulmer."

The other seemed not to hear what he said; but, mounting the steps into the oriel at once, he took Iola's hand, saying—

"This must be the Lady Iola."

With a cheek as pale as death, and an eye cold and fixed, but with a firm and unwavering tone, the fair girl answered—

"My name is Iola, my lord. This is my cousin Constance. We grieve that my uncle is not here to receive you fittingly."

"I bring you tidings of your uncle, dear lady," replied Fulmer, still addressing her alone.

"A messenger reached me from him at an early hour this morning, telling me that he would be at Chidlow during the evening, with a gay train of guests, and bidding me ride on and have everything prepared for their reception. He spoke indeed of sending a servant forward himself. Has no one arrived?"

"No one, my lord," replied Iola, "at least no one that we have heard of. But having lived long in close seclusion, we are, as it were, strangers in my uncle's house, without occupation or authority. I pray you use that which my uncle has given you, to order all that may be necessary. As for us, I think we will now retire."

"Nay, not so soon," exclaimed Fulmer, eagerly. "This is but a brief interview indeed."

Sir Edward Hungerford too, in sweet and persuasive tones, besought the two ladies not to leave them, but to stay and give their good advice, as to the delicate preparation of the castle for the expected guests; but Iola remained firm to her purpose; and Constance,

when she saw that it would distress her to remain, joined her voice to her cousin's; and, leaving the two gentlemen in the hall, they retired to Iola's chamber.

With her arm through that of Constance, Iola walked slowly but firmly thither; and it was only, as she approached the door, that anything like agitation showed itself. Then, however, Constance felt her steps waver and her frame shake; and, when they had entered the room, Iola cast herself on her knees by the side of the bed, hid her face upon its coverings and wept.

CHAPTER VI.

When Iola and her fair cousin were gone, Lord Fulmer gazed for a moment from the window, with a thoughtful and absent look; and then, descending the steps, walked once or twice up and down the hall. At length, turning to Sir Edward Hungerford, he exclaimed:

"She is beautiful, indeed! Is she not, Hungerford?"

"Yes, exceedingly," replied the young knight; "although, methinks the upper lip might be a trifle longer; but, you would think

her fairer still, if you beheld her as I first saw her, with a colour in her cheek, like that of the morning sky. Now, I know not why, she is as pale as one of those marble statues which we see at Rome."

"Emotion!" said Fulmer, thoughtfully. "Perhaps it was wrong to take her thus, by surprise.—Come, Hungerford, let us give these orders, with which I am charged; and, advancing to the door, he called for the attendants.

The orders were not so difficult to give as to execute; for they implied immediate preparation for the accommodation of at least twenty honoured guests besides the usual inhabitants of the castle, together with all their attendants, and for a splendid repast, to be ready for supper at the unusually late hour of nine. Special directions were added, to prepare one of the numerous detached buildings, which were frequently to be found within the walls of the fortified houses of those days, for the reception of the Lord Chartley and his train; and a portion of the immense range of stabling,

which lay, strange to say, immediately at the back of the chapel, was to be set apart exclusively for his horses. Sir Edward Hungerford listened in polite silence, till Fulmer had delivered himself of his commission to the chief officer of Lord Calverly's household; but he could not suffer the good man to depart, without putting in a word or two, as advice to the master cook, concerning the dressing of cygnets, and the absolute necessity of immediately seeking a young heron of last year, or at least a bittern, as heron poults were not to be obtained.

"Porpoises are hopeless," he said, "at this distance from the sea; and squirrels in the spring are lean and poor; but, I have known a large luce, quaintly stewed with lard, supply the place of the one, while a coney may do well instead of the other; only I fear me it is somewhat late in the year."

The major domo bowed reverently at this discourse; and, as soon as he was gone, Fulmer exclaimed: "Come, Hungerford, let us walk upon the battlements, this sunshiny after-

noon. Perchance these two fair girls may come down to breathe the air."

"Stay," replied Sir Edward Hungerford. "I will go and put on my green and sable surcoat; if they see it, it may attract them."

"Pshaw!" cried Fulmer. "Do you think they are bulls, which, men say, will run after a piece of cloth of a particular colour?"

"Nay!" replied Hungerford, with perhaps a little spice of malice; "but this surcoat of mine, is, point for point, the very model of Chartley's."

"What has Chartley to do with the matter?" demanded Fulmer, turning full upon him, with some surprise.

"It shall be on in a moment," replied Sir Edward, without answering his question. "I hate this orange tawny colour, though it be now worn by every one. It does not suit my complexion. 'Tis a sort of jealousy colour. I will no more on't;" and away he went.

Lord Fulmer paced up and down the hall. "Her greeting was mighty cold," he thought.

"Well, perhaps 'twas natural; and yet 'twas less troubled, than chilly. She seemed firm enough, but yet as icy as the grave—What can this man mean about Chartley?—Nothing, nothing. He has no meaning in him—I wish her greeting had been somewhat warmer—and in his presence too. He smiled, when he talked of Chartley."

He had not time for any long meditations, for he was very soon rejoined by his friend, habited in the most extravagant extreme of the mode, with the sleeves of his surcoat actually trailing on the ground when not fixed back to his shoulders by small loops of gold cord, and ruby buttons. The two gentlemen then found their way to the battlements, and walked round nearly their whole extent: Hungerford looking up, from time to time, at the principal masses of the building, in the hopes of ascertaining, by seeing some sweet face at a window, in what part of the castle, Constance and her cousin were lodged. He said no more upon the subject of Iola and Chartley; and Fulmer did not

choose to inquire further, though, to say the truth, the mere casual words he had heard, implying in reality little or nothing, rested on his mind more than he wished. Wrapped up in the thoughts of his own glittering person, Sir Edward Hungerford walked on by his friend's side in silence, and might perhaps have said nothing more for the next half hour, if Fulmer had not begun the conversation himself. Of course, it was begun from a point quite different from that at which he proposed to arrive.

"This castle is pleasantly situated," he said, "and commands all the country round."

"Good faith, I like your own better," answered Sir Edward Hungerford. "Sheltered as it is, by woods and higher hills than that on which it stands, you have no dread of north winds there. Here, let it blow from east, west, north or south, you meet with every gust of Heaven that is going; and, unless a man's skin be as tough as a horse's hide, he will ruin his complexion in a fortnight."

"I like it better," said Fulmer. "I love to

have a free sight round me, to look afar, and see what comes on every side, to catch the rays of the sun in their warmth, aye, and sometimes to give the sharp wind buffet for buffet. Were both mine, I should choose this for my residence."

"Well, it will soon be yours," answered Sir Edward Hungerford; "for, I suppose your marriage is to take place speedily; and this old lord cannot live long. He is worn out with wisdom. You can then inhabit which you like. Every man has his tastes, Fulmer. Some, as you know, delight in orange tawny. I abominate the hue. You dislike your own place, and prefer Chidlow, I the reverse. You, doubtless, judge Iola the most beautiful. I admire little Constance, with her thoughful brow."

"Because you have no more thought yourself, than would lie in the hem of a silk jerkin," replied Fulmer. "Yet, methinks she were too grave for you."

"Nay! She can be merry enough when she

is with those who please her," replied Hungerford, with a self satisfied nod of his head. "That pretty little mouth can dimple with smiles, I assure you."

"Why, how know you all this, Hungerford?" asked Fulmer, in as light a tone as he could assume. "You seem to be wondrous well acquainted with these ladies' characters."

"Aye, aye," replied Sir Edward, with a mysterious and yet laughing look. "Constance and I passed that self same evening side by side; and, in one evening, a man may learn and teach a great deal."

"What evening?—What do you mean?" demanded Fulmer, sharply; but, his companion only laughed, replying:—

"Ha! ha! Now, I could make you jealous —But, hush! No more just now. Some one is coming; and look, here is a party riding up —There, over that hill, upon the Leicester road."

The person who approached along the battlements was Lord Calverly's master of the

household, come for some explanation from the young lord, whom he knew right well; and, while he spoke with Fulmer, Sir Edward Hungerford threw himself into a graceful attitude by one of the embrasures, and fell into thought —aye reader, even into thought; for he was somewhat different in reality from that which he has hitherto appeared to you. I have only depicted him in certain scenes, and recorded his sayings and doings therein; and, if you judge other men, in your actual commerce with the world by such partial views, you will make a great mistake—unless indeed you possess that instinct, the gift of few, which enables some to pierce through all the various veils with which men cover themselves, and see their real characters at once in their nakedness. Notwithstanding all the trifling, and the foppery, and the folly of Sir Edward Hungerford, there was no lack of brain beneath that frivolous exterior. I do not mean to say that his apparent tastes and pursuits were altogether assumed. He had a real fondness for splendour

and delicacy of dress, for refinements in cookery, and softness and smoothness of demeanour. He was inordinately vain too of his person; and these were certainly defects, aye, and defects of intellect; for they showed a misappreciation of the worth of things; but, if you set down every fop for a fool, you will commit an egregious error. Every man has his weak point, they say; and foppery is certainly a very great one; but there may be a many strong points behind; and such was the case with this young knight. He was a man of undoubted courage, notwithstanding all his care for his fine person; by no means eager in quarrel, who could hear a jest, or a taunt, or even a reproach, with great patience, provided it did not become an insult; but then no one was more ready with his sword. The man, in short, who wished to fight him, he was ever prepared to fight; but he never showed any of that assassin-like love of mere fighting, which has gained many a man, very unjustly, the reputation of great courage. Not, however, to

make him appear better than he really was, I must say a few words more upon his character. Though he could think deeply, and sometimes well, upon any subject placed before him, yet he had no value whatever for the power of thought. His great fault was a miscomprehension of what is precious and what is valueless in man; and this affected his estimation of his own qualities as well as those of others. Whether from a strange but not unusual philosophy, he thought the trifles of every day life more important to man's happiness from their frequent occurrence, than the weighty things of the heart and mind; or whether the mocking persiflage of the court in which he had been brought up, had sunk, as it were, into his spirit, and made him look upon all things equally as trifles, I cannot tell; but certainly he would have prided himself more upon the cut of a doublet, which would have secured a multitude of imitators, than upon the wisest saying he could have uttered, or upon the profoundest reflections that could have passed

through his mind. But this philosophy, or whatever it was, had its dangers and its evils. He looked upon morals with the same distorted vision as upon all other matters; even laughed at restraints which other men held sacred, and regarded every course of conduct as perfectly indifferent, because all things were equally empty and idle. To the punctilios of honour, as to the ceremonies of religion, he submitted with a good grace, merely because it was not worth while to contest them; and, if he did not injure a friend, or betray a cause he had espoused, or violate his plighted word, it was merely—I will not say by accident—by some slight impression received in youth, which he would have scoffed at in his own mind, if any one attempted to erect it into a principle. He seldom argued indeed, and never combatted other men's opinions, because he thought it quite as well that they should have them as not; and the only thing he thought it worth while to reason upon for five minutes, was the fashion of a point, or a cloak, the design of a

piece of embroidery, or the composition of an essence. These matters indeed rose into some importance with him; but the cause was, that he had talked himself into a vanity upon the subject, and other men had given value to his decisions by following them as law.

He thought then, while his companion was engaged in conversation; and his mind rested naturally upon things which had just passed.

"How some men trouble themselves about vain fancies," he said to himself. "Here is this good friend of mine would soon be in a flame of jealousy, if he knew all; not considering how very foolish and unlike a gentleman it is to be jealous at all. It is quite a gone bye mode, a faded suit, since good King Edward's days, and is as bad as a pale yellow doublet with a crimson cloak. Yet this man would wear it, and make himself as ridiculous as a Turk, with fifty wives, and jealous of them all. It would be amusing enough to see him, with all the wonderful graces of such a condition, now writhing like a saltimbank, yet grinning

all the while to hide his pangs—then with a moody air walking apart with crossed angry arms, and thundery brow, and now affecting the gay and jocular, and dealing blows right and left, under the colour of sportive playfulness, only waiting to cut some one's throat, till he got the proof positive, which never comes. —But I will not do it. It is not worth the while. Trouble would grow out of it; and nothing on earth is worth trouble but a dish of lampreys or a pair of new fashioned hosen.— They are coming on fast," he continued aloud, looking from the walls. "On my life I believe it is the old pompous lord coming at the full gallop as if he were following a falcon.—Come Fulmer, come; let us down to the gates. Here is that most honourable peer, Arnold Lord Calverly, with two or three score in company, riding as fast as if King Richard were behind him. Pray Heaven the good nobleman's horse stumble not, or what a squelch there will be."

Thus saying, he began to descend one of those little flights of steps, which, in castles

such as that of Chidlow, led from the battlements into the courtyard. Fulmer followed with a quick step; but the words of Sir Edward Hungerford had already planted doubts and apprehensions, which were not easily to be removed.

CHAPTER VII.

"It was discreet, my lord, it was discreet," said Lord Calverly, as he walked up into the hall with Fulmer by his side; "and take my word for it, that discretion is a quality which every man should prize in a wife. She meant you no offence, depend upon it, but with maidenly modesty retired till she had the sanction of her guardian's presence."

"I made no complaint, my dear lord," replied Fulmer, for the first time aware that, in telling how soon Iola had left him, his tone had displayed some mortification; "I merely said

that, after a moment's interview, the dear girl withdrew; and you may easily imagine that I should have better liked her stay."

"Nay, nay, not so," answered the old peer. "That is a boyish fancy. We should always prefer lengthened happiness to present pleasure. Now, her retiring was a sign of that frame of mind, which will be your best happiness hereafter, therefore you should have been well pleased."

Fulmer set his teeth tight together, bearing the lecture with impatience, to which he did not choose to give utterance; but the next moment the old lord continued, saying—

"Thanks for your diligence, my dear lord. I see the people are all in a bustle of preparation. My noble friend Lord Chartley, will be here anon; for, good sooth, it gave me some trouble to outride him; and I would not have him find anything in disarray; for his own household, I am told, is the best ordered in England."

The words galled their auditor. He asked

himself why it should be so; and he had nothing to reply; for the movements of the human heart, deep, subtle, and intricate, conceal themselves constantly more or less, not only from the eyes of the outward world, but from the sight of the mind, which is affected by their impulses. As the ship leaves no permanent trace in the ever closing waters, as the arrow marks not its path through the sky, so do feelings often pass through the human heart, leaving no trace of the way by which they came and went.

Fulmer could not prevent a frown from gathering on his brow; but, though marked by Sir Edward Hungerford, it passed unnoticed by old Lord Calverly, whose coming somewhat earlier than had been expected, set the whole household of the castle in movement. Orders had to be given; rooms to be assigned; new preparations to be ordered; old preparations to be undone; servants, attendants, guests hurried here and there; and a great deal of bustle, and not a little confusion,

prevailed, when, at length, Iola and Constance appeared in answer to a summons from their uncle. The former was still very pale; and the keen and marking eye of Fulmer detected —or he fancied that he detected—the trace of tears upon her beautiful cheek.

All passed unnoticed by her self-occupied uncle. He had not seen her for nearly two years; and he did not remark any change in her appearance. She might have been pale before, for aught he knew; and besides he was too busy to take any note of such trifling things as paleness or tears. He saluted both his nieces, and welcomed them to Chidlow in fewer words than was his wont, asked why their aunt, the abbess, had not come with them at his summons, but waited for no answer; and, committing them to the care of Lord Fulmer and Sir Edward Hungerford, with some gentlemen of inferior fortune and station who had accompanied him from Leicester, he proceeded to reiterate orders given twice before, and confuse his servants with manifold directions, often somewhat contradictory.

Left in the hall with her cousin, and her uncle's guests, Iola felt some relief in the numbers who were present. Fulmer would fain have enacted the lover's part; nor was he indeed at all unfitted to do so; for his heart was naturally warm and impetuous; and Iola's beauty and grace might well have kindled the flame of love in a colder breast than his own. Strange, human nature, too, would have it, that the doubts and apprehensions which had arisen in his mind, should render him only the more eager to overcome anything like coldness upon her part; and he strove, with soft speeches and low toned words, to win her ear to himself alone.

The result was not favourable. Iola listened calmly, coldly, and ever replied aloud, in words which all the world might hear. She did so, not upon any plan or system indeed, but from the feelings which were busy in her own heart, and the impressions which his words produced. She was contrasting them all the time with those of Chartley; and to her

mind, at least, the comparison was unfavourable. The frank, gay manner, the lively half careless answer, the want of all study and formality, the shining forth of a heart that, like a gay bird, seemed made captive in spite of itself, which had all pleased, excited, won her in Chartley, was not to be found in the conversation or demeanour of Lord Fulmer. Between her and him, there were but few subjects in common: the only one, indeed, being that from which she shrunk away with apprehension. He could but have recourse to the common places of love and admiration; and they were not at all fitted to win her. It was his misfortune indeed, and not his fault; but yet we often aggravate our misfortunes by our faults; and so it was in some degree with Fulmer. He had dreamed bright dreams of their meeting; and, little knowing woman's heart, he had fancied that she would do the same, that she would look forward with the same hopes to their union, that her heart unwooed would spring to meet his; and he was disappointed,

mortified, somewhat irritated, to find that it was not so. Worse, in the end he showed such feelings in his manner, and, by an impatient look and tone, caused Iola to shrink from him still more coldly.

It was just at that moment, that old Lord Calverly returned, saying aloud—

"Our other guests are coming. They are just at the castle gates. Now, Constance," he continued, for his lordship would sometimes venture an insipid joke, "now Constance, if you would win a rich and noble husband, put on your brightest smiles."

"Who may he be, my lord?" asked Constance, who as well as Iola was ignorant of the names of the persons expected.

"Nay, nay, you will see," said Lord Calverly. "Did not his young lordship tell you?"

"No, indeed!" answered Constance quietly; "but I can wait in patience, my good lord. Time brings all things to light."

Through the open windows, came the clattering sound of horses' feet from the courtyard,

and then of orders given and voices speaking. There is something very strange in our memory of sounds. How long, how clearly we remember, how definitely we can trace back those intangible foot-prints of things that we have loved or dreaded, on the pathway of the air. A tone which has once awakened strong emotions, is never forgotten. Iola's heart thrilled as she heard those sounds from the court.

There was then a pause of a minute or two, during which no one spoke. Then came steps upon the short, wide staircase; and then the door opened. Fulmer fixed his eyes upon Iola's face; but she remarked not that he did so; for her own look was bent forward upon the door. He saw a clear light rise up in her eyes, a soft, warm glow spread itself over her cheek and forehead, a bright, but very transient smile, extinguished as soon as lighted, beam upon her beautiful lips. The next instant she was calm and pale again; and, turning his head, he saw Chartley approaching.

The wound was given. His doubts, his apprehensions, his suspicions were confirmed. Yet there was nothing tangible; nothing that could justify him in saying a word, or acting in any way except as before. But that was the greater torture; and now he resolved to watch for some occasion to speak or do. In the mean time Chartley advanced rapidly, followed by good Sir William Arden. He was somewhat changed since Iola had seen him. He looked graver, sterner. His cheek had grown pale too. There were care and thought written on his brow.

"He has suffered also," thought Iola; and her heart sunk more than ever.

"Oh, would that I had told him all at once!" she said in her own heart. "Yet how could I do it. Alas, that I should make him unhappy too."

Chartley's manner however showed no agitation. He had been prepared by his conversation with Lord Calverly to meet those whom

he found there; and, at once addressing the old nobleman, he said:

"I here redeem my parole, my good lord, and surrender myself to your ward, according to the king's will, and to my word given this morning when you left me."

Then turning to Iola, he took her hand with a frank but grave air, and bent his head over it, saying, "dear lady, I rejoice to see you once again, and trust that you have been well since the evening when we met."

With a degree of haste, which was the only sign of emotion he showed, he next saluted Constance, almost in the same words; but then with a kindly and sincere tone, inquired after her aunt, the abbess, trusting that she had not suffered from the alarm and anxiety she must have felt on the night when he last saw her. He listened too attentively to Constance's reply; but he could not prevent his eyes from wandering for a moment back to the face of Iola; and then, with a sort of start, he turned away, looking round the

circle, and exclaimed, "oh, Hungerford, I did not expect to meet you here. When you left me at Leicester, I thought you were bound for London, and believed you, even now, plunged in a sea of green Genoa velvet."

"Nay, you forget," replied Sir Edward Hungerford; "summer is coming on. No one could venture to wear velvet for the next eight months, except a lord mayor or an alderman."

"Faith, I know not much of such matters," answered Chartley; "but that is the most reasonable piece of tailorism I have heard, which gives us warm clothing for our winter wear and lighter garments for our summer use. However I thought you were in London."

"So had I been," answered the young knight; "but I was stopped by a delicate epistle from my friend Lord Fulmer, here, containing an invitation not to be refused."

"Let me make you acquainted my good lords," said Lord Calverly, advancing between the two young noblemen, and presenting them to each other. Each bowed with a stiff and

stately air; and Chartley paused for a moment, as if to see whether Fulmer would speak or not; but, finding him silent, he turned on his heel; and, seeing Sir William Arden talking bluffly to Iola, he took his place by the side of Constance, and once more spoke of the night of their meeting.

The entrance of the young nobleman and those who accompanied him, had caused one of those pauses which are very common in—I might say peculiar to—English society. Amongst foreigners in general, a stranger can enter, glide in amongst the other guests, speak with those he knows, pass those who are strangers, and be introduced to this person or to that, without interrupting the occupations or amusements going on. If his rank be very high, or his character very distinguished, a slight murmur, a hardly perceptible movement, and a few seconds of observation, form all that is produced by his appearance; but here, such is not the case; and, unless the conversation going forward be very entertaining indeed, or the amuse-

ment in progress very exciting, a long silence follows the introduction of any personage worthy of note, during which he is well aware that every body is observing and commenting upon him. Such had been in a great degree the case in the present instance. For the first five minutes, nobody had spoken but Chartley, Iola, Constance, their uncle, and Sir Edward Hungerford. But, at the end of that time, each of the many guests resumed his conversation with his neighbour; and Chartley had a better opportunity of saying a few words, which he did not wish heard, to Constance, while the busy buzz of tongues prevailed around.

"I am happy, dear lady," he said, as soon as he had made sure of the moment, "to see you looking so well. I wish I could say the same of your sweet cousin. She looks pale, anxious, and thoughtful."

He paused as if for an answer, but Constance merely replied, "she does not look well indeed."

"I fear," continued Chartley, "that terrible

night she passed in the forest, with all the alarm that she must have felt, was too much for her fair and delicate frame. I did my best, believe me, to comfort and protect her; but my best was but little, and she must have suffered much."

"I do not think that had any effect," replied Constance. "Her health has ever been strong and unimpaired—" she stopped for an instant, fearful of being led on to say more than she intended, and then added; "but she certainly looks ill. She speaks however, my lord, with great gratitude of the kindness which you showed her, on that terrible night, which I shall never think of without dread."

"Gratitude!" said Chartley, with a smile. "Kindness! Dear lady, she must have formed a very unfavourable opinion of mankind, if she thought there was any gentleman who would not do the same."

"But it may be done in very different ways, my noble lord," answered Constance; "and

she assured me that you treated her, as if you had been a brother."

Chartley murmured to himself in a low tone, "Would that I could have felt as one!" The sounds were hardly articulate; but they caught the ear of his companion; and the whole secret was revealed at once. She cast down her eyes in painful thought, from which she was roused the moment after by Chartley saying, almost in a whisper,

"Will you give her a message for me, dear lady? for I may never have the opportunity of saying what I wish myself."

"What is it, my lord?" demanded Constance, timidly, with a glow of agitation coming into her cheek.

"It is merely this," replied the young nobleman. "Tell her, that he for whom she risked so much—I mean the bishop of Ely—is safe in France. I have received intimation of the fact from a sure hand.—Tell her so, and add that, if the deepest gratitude and the sincerest

regard can compensate for what she underwent that night, she has them."

"I will," replied Constance. "I will repeat your words exactly.—There can be no harm in that."

She laid some emphasis on the last words; and Chartley gazed in her face as if to learn the interpretation thereof. "There *can* indeed, be no harm in that," he rejoined: "nor in telling her any thought of my mind towards her."

Constance was about to reply; but, looking up, she saw the eyes of her uncle fixed upon her, with a meaning smile upon his lip, as if he thought she had already made a conquest of Lord Chartley. The conversation between them then paused; and Lord Calverly, crossing to where they stood, proposed to lead the young nobleman, who was partly his guest, partly his prisoner, to the lodging which had been prepared for him, his friend Sir William Arden, and their attendants. Chartley followed in silence, and found everything done that it was possible to do, to render his residence at Chidlow pleasant.

The old lord was all courtesy and kindness. In his usual pompous tone, he excused what he called the poverty of the furniture, though it was in reality of a very splendid description. He declared the bed was not half large enough, though it would have afforded room to turn in, to at least six well grown persons. The plumes of feathers too at the top of the posts, he declared were in a bad fashion as well as the hangings of the bed, and the tapestry of the bedroom, somewhat faded. The antechamber and the chamber adjoining were well enough, though somewhat confined, he said; but he excused their narrowness, on account of that part of the building being the most ancient of all, the tower having been built by William the Bastard.

"Our Norman ancestors," he said, "thought more of defence than convenience; but we have larger apartments in the main building, where Lord Chartley will always be received as an honored guest. And now, my dear young lord," he continued; "though I grieve in some

sort to be made, as it were, your jailer, yet in some sort I rejoice; for I can lighten your captivity, or to call it by a better name, your wardship. I would fain have it as mild as may be, and, though I am responsible to the king for your person, yet I would only secure you by bolts and bars of words, and fetters of air. Give me your promise, as knight and nobleman, as you did this morning, that you will make no attempt to escape, and then roam whithersoever you will. I will set no spies upon you. You have then only to fancy yourself a guest in my poor mansion, and all the pangs of imprisonment are gone."

"A thousand thanks, my noble friend," replied Chartley. "My promise I freely give; but it were better for both you and me, that your forbearance and my engagement should have a limit. Let it be from month to month. Thus, the first of every month I present myself as your prisoner, and then you can renew your kind permission if you please, or not."

"Agreed, agreed," cried Lord Calverly. "It

is a marvellous good arrangement. The rooms of your friend, Sir William Arden, an exceedingly good and valiant knight, though somewhat more familiar with the battle field than with bower or hall, are immediately above you; the rooms of your own attendants below. The truckle beds in the antechamber, are somewhat small, but will serve two of the knaves well enough. And now I leave you, with a warning that our repast will be upon the board within the hour.—Ha, here comes Sir William Arden across the court, conducted by my cousin John. I will tell him of our supper hour as we pass; but he does not spend much time on his apparel I should think."

"Good faith, he is well apparelled in his own high qualities," replied Chartley, "however he be dressed. The wool of a sheep, and the entrails of a silkworm make but a poor addition in my eyes to a man's own worth—but" he added, not willing that his bluff friend should be undervalued, even by one who esteemed wealth as a high quality; "the plain-

ness of Arden's apparel is from choice and not necessity. Doubtless, you know, my lord, that in worldly wealth he is as well furnished as in qualities of heart."

"Nay, nay, I did not know it," said Lord Calverly, with a look of much interest. "I thought he was but one of the knights of your household."

"My mother's first cousin," replied Chartley, "which is the cause of his attachment to myself."

"Nay, nay, your own high merits," said Lord Calverly, with a sliding bow, and took his leave.

In a few minutes more, Sir William Arden entered Chartley's room, with a gay air.

"Well, boy," he exclaimed, "here you are a prisoner. Think yourself happy, that you have not been gored by the boar's tusks. Good faith, he wounds deep where he strikes. That old fool, our host, has stopped me for five minutes in the court, with a panegyric on your merits, and looked much surprized, when I told

him the plain truth, to wit, that you are a foolish, madheaded boy, who will need fifty such hard lessons as you have received, before you get some grains of common sense beaten into you."

Arden threw himself on a seat in the window, as he spoke, and gazed out, little attending to Chartley's answer, which consisted but of some words of course. He remained silent, even for a minute or two after; but then, turning sharply round, he said—

"Tell me, Chartley, what has happened to that sweet girl, Iola? She that was bright, is dull; she, who was gay, is sad; she, whose cheek was like the rose, is now like a lily bending amongst its green leaves, bowed down with drops of dew."

"Nay, I know not," answered Chartley, leaning his head upon his hand, and bending his eyes upon the table.

"Then, what's the matter with you, my lord?" rejoined Sir William Arden; "for yours is the same case as hers. You are sad

where you were gay; you are stupid where you were sharp; you look like a pipped hen instead of a rosy bumpkin."

"Methinks, my present situation were enough to account for all this," replied Chartley.

"Come, come. That will not do, my lord," answered his friend. "I have seen you in much worse plight, when we were taken by the brown fellows at Tripoli; and you were then as gay as a lack. Better, you should have some one to consult with. Tell me in a word, then. Were you making love to this dear little lady, when you were out with her the whole night in the forest? It was a great temptation, truly. I was half inclined at supper, to make an old fool of myself, and say sweet things to pretty Constance, just to console her for the empty babbling of Ned Hungerford."

Chartley still leaned his arm upon the table, and remained in thought. It was not a usual mood with him; for generally, the first emotions of his heart soonest found utterance; but new passions will produce new conduct. For

the first time in his life, he felt inclined to be angry at his acts being inquired into, even by a friend, for the purposes of friendship. But he felt that it was foolish and wrong; and, being a very imperfect creature, after a brief struggle, he went into the opposite extreme.

"You are too sharp a questioner, Arden," he said, with a laugh, which had somewhat of his old gaiety in it; "but I'll answer your question manfully. I do not think the name of love ever passed my lips during that whole night."

"Aye, aye," cried the bluff knight; "but talking of love is not making it."

"Perhaps not," answered Chartley; "but, if I did make it, it was without intention. One thing however, I feel too well, that, if I did not make love, I learned to love; and that is much worse. But it were worse still, Arden, should I have taught her to love too."

"Why so?" asked Sir William Arden, with a start.

"And yet I cannot think it," said Chartley, pursuing his own course of thought. "No, no, God forbid! This paleness, this sadness may have a thousand other causes."

"But, how now? What's the matter?" asked Arden, again. "Why should you wish yourself unloved? Remember, young man, when once put on, you cannot strip off love like a soiled jerkin. The honest man and true, seeks no love that he cannot wear for ever—at least, till the garment drops off of itself."

"You do not know. You do not understand," said Chartley, impatiently. "The lady is contracted, I tell you, to this Lord Fulmer—aye, contracted in infancy, by every tie, but the mere last ceremony of the church."

"And did she not tell you?" demanded Arden. "That was wrong, very wrong."

"'Tis you, who are wrong," replied Chartley. "Why should she tell me? How should she tell me, when I never spoke to her of love?

What my manner said, I know not; but there was not one word uttered by me, which could give her a plea for relating to me all her private history. I thought I should have plenty of opportunity of speaking boldly, at an after time; and, alarmed and agitated as she was, I would not for the world, have said or done aught that could add to what she felt. Since then, I have learned that she was contracted when a child, to this Lord Fulmer; but that, educated as he has been at the court of Burgundy, they have never met from infancy till now."

"Damnation!" cried Sir William Arden, striding up and down the room. "This is the most unpleasant thing I ever had to deal with! And you forced to live in the same house with him too. In fortune's name, what will you do, my dear boy?"

"As best, I may," answered Chartley. "Perhaps 'twere as well, Arden, to resume the appearance at least, of all my old light spirits. At the worst, she will then but tax me with

levity; and, if the feelings she has taught me, have been at all learned by herself, she will soon be brought to believe that I am unworthy, because careless, of her affections, and feel the less regret, at the sacrifice she must make."

"Don't resume, or assume anything, my dear lord," answered Sir William Arden. "Be what you are, seem what you are at all times. Confound me, all men that walk in vizards! The best result always comes of the most straightforward course. But, I will go and change these travel-soiled garments, and think of it all, while I am getting the dust out of my eyes—By the Lord that lives," he continued, looking out at the window, "there comes the abbess of St. Clair into the court, with Heaven knows, how many more people. The castle will be too full; and I shall have to share my room with her. Well, thank Heaven for all things. She is a merry little fat soul, and will help us to laugh care away."

Thus saying, he turned and left his friend,

who was not ill satisfied on the whole, at having been forced into making a confidant of one, on whose honour, integrity, and good sense he could firmly rely.

CHAPTER VIII.

THERE was a man walking in the woods, with a slight limp in his gait. He was coarsely but comfortably dressed, and had something very like a Cretan cap upon his head. His face was a merry face, well preserved in wine or some other strong liquor; and, from the leathern belt, which girt his brown coat close round his waist, stuck out, on the one side a long knife, and on the other, the chanter of a bag-pipe. The bag, alas, was gone.

He looked up at the blue clear sky. He looked up at the green leaves, just peering from

the branches over his head; and, as he went, he sang; for his pipes had been spoiled by Catesby's soldiery; and his own throat was the only instrument of music left him.

SONG.

Oh, merry spring, merry spring!
With sunshine on thy back, and dew upon thy wing
Sweetest bird of all the year,
How I love to see thee here,
And thy choristers to hear,
As they sing.

Oh happy time, happy time!
When buds of hawthorn burst, and honey-suckles climb,
And the maidens of the May,
Hear the sweet bells as they play,
And make out what they say
In their chime.

Oh jolly hours, jolly hours!
Of young and happy hearts, in gay and pleasant bowers,
Could I my spring recall,
I'd be merrier than all;
But my year is in the fall
Of the flowers.

Still, I feel there comes a day
Far brighter, than e'er shone upon this round of clay,
When life with swallow's wing,
Shall find another spring,
And my spirit yet shall sing,
In the ray.

Thus sang Sam the piper, as, with his rolling gait, but at a good pace, he walked on from the high road, running between Atherston and Hinckley, down the narrower walk of the forest, which led, past the cottage of the woodman, to the bank of the stream. His was a merry heart, which sought and found happiness where'er it could be met with, and bore misfortune or adversity, as lightly as any heart that ever was created. Oh, blessed thing, that cheerfulness of disposition, which makes its own sunshine in this wintry world—blessed whencesoever it comes, but most blessed when it springs from a fountain of conscious rectitude, a calm unspotted memory, and a bright high hope!

I cannot say that this was exactly the case with our good friend, Sam; but he had a won-

derful faculty, notwithstanding, of forgetting past pains and shutting his eyes to coming dangers. His wants were so few, that he could entertain but small fear of their not being satisfied; and, though his desires were somewhat more extensive, yet the rims of a trencher and a pottle pot were sufficient to contain them. Apprehensions, he entertained none; cares, he had long before cast to the winds; and by circumscribing his pleasures and his necessities, within the smallest possible limits, it was wonderful how easily he walked under the only pack he had to carry through the world. Other men's sorrows and misfortunes, the strife of nations, intestine wars, portents, or phenomena, acts of violence and crime, I may say, afforded him amusement, without at all impugning poor Sam's kindness of heart or goodness of disposition; for all I mean to say is, that they gave him something to gossip about. Now gossiping and singing were Sam's only amusements, since a brutal soldier had cut his bag in twain. Drinking was with him a necessary evil, which

he got over as soon as possible, whenever he had the means.

He was now on his way from Hinckley, to disgorge upon the abbey miller, who lived near the bridge, all the budget of news he had collected at that little town, and other places during the last fortnight or three weeks. He would willingly have bestowed a part of the stock upon Boyd the woodman; but he did not venture even to think of doing so, inasmuch as Boyd affected to be as great an enemy to gossip as the miller was a friend.

The summer sunshine, however, coming a month or two before its time, had lured Boyd to his door; and there he sat, with a large strong knife in his hand, and sundry long poles of yew and other wood, fashioning arrows with the greatest possible skill. It was wonderful to behold, how straight, and round, and even, he cut them without compass or rule, or any other implement, but the knife. Then too, how neatly he adjusted the feathers to the shaft, from

a bundle of gray goose quills that lay on his left hand. Heads indeed were wanting; but Boyd thought to himself, "I will bring six or eight score from Tamworth when next I go. At all events it is well to be prepared."

As he thus thought, the step of the piper, coming down the road, met his ear; and he looked up; but Sam would have passed him by with a mere "good morning;" for he stood in some awe of Master Boyd, had not the woodman himself addressed him, in a tone that might be called almost kindly, saying:

"Well, Sam. How goes the world with you? You have got a new coat and hosen, I see."

"Ay, thanks to the young lord's gold pieces," answered Sam. "He paid well and honestly; and I took a mighty resolution, and spent it on my back rather than on my belly."

"Ay, some grace left!" exclaimed Boyd. "But what has happened to thy pipes, man? They used always to be under thine elbow, and not stuck into thy belt."

"Those rascal troopers slit my bag," answered the piper; "and I shall have to travel through three counties ere I get another. I lost a silver groat, I am sure, by the want of it this very morning; for there was a bright company at Hinckley, and some of them speaking the Scottish tongue. Now every Scot loves the bagpipe."

"But not such pipes as yours," answered Boyd. "Theirs are of a different make. But who were these people, did you hear?"

"Nay, I asked no names," replied Sam; "for Scots do not like to be questioned. But there was a fair lady with them—very fair and very beautiful still, though the spring tide of her life had gone by—and the people called her Highness."

The woodman mused, and then inquired: "Were they all Scottish people?"

"Nay, some were English," answered Sam, "gallants of the king's court I judge, and speaking as good English as you or I do. But there were several Scottish persons of quality

too, besides the lady who was so I am sure—for what English princess should she be?"

"And were they all so gaily dressed then?" asked Boyd, in the same musing tone.

"Some were, and some were not," replied the piper; "but the lady herself was plainest of them all, more like a nun than a princess. But you can see them with your own eyes if you like; for they will pass by in half an hour, if they keep to the time at which they said they would set out. They are going to offer at St. Clare; and you have but to plant yourself at the gate, or under a tree by the roadside; and they will all pass you like a show."

"I will," replied the woodman; and, rising from his seat, he put his hat, which had been lying beside him, on his head; and was striding away, when suddenly, seeming to recollect himself, he turned back, saying to the piper, "I dare say thou art thirsty and hungry too, Sam. Come in with me, and thou shalt have a draught of ale, and a hunch of ewe-milk cheese."

It was an invitation not to be refused by the piper, to whom meat and drink rarely came amiss. He accordingly followed, and received what was proffered gratefully. The woodman waited not to hear his thanks, but, having seen him drink a moderate quart of ale, sent him away with well nigh half a loaf of brown bread and a lump of cheese as large as his two fists. Then, leaving his huge dog to watch the house, he, himself, took his departure, and walked with a rapid pace to the road which the piper had mentioned. There he stationed himself under the very tree by which he had been standing on a night eventful to him, when he had slain one of the king's couriers or posts. One would have thought the memory must have been painful; but it seemed to affect him not in the least. He stood and gazed upon the very spot where the man had fallen; and, had there not been rain since then, the blood would have been still upon the stones; but, if there was any change in his countenance at all, it was merely that his brow somewhat relaxed;

and a faint smile came upon his lip. "It was the hand of justice," he said to himself. "Yet 'tis strange there has been no inquiry. I went in and touched the body; but it did not bleed. The inanimate corpse recognised the hand of the avenger, and refused to accuse."*

He waited for some time, every now and then looking up the road, and sometimes bending his head to listen. At length he caught the sound of horses' feet coming at a slow pace, and making but little noise; for, as I have said elsewhere, the road was sandy. He then looked up the hill, and saw, coming slowly down, in no very regular order, a party of from twenty to five and twenty persons, male and female. Without waiting for anything but the first casual glance, he withdrew a little further from the road, amongst the high

* He referred, of course, to the superstitious notion prevalent not alone at that time but for long afterwards, that if the body of a murdered man was touched by the hand of his assassin, the wound of which he died would bleed. I may remark that such superstitions were recognised even in Scottish courts of justice long after they were extinct in England.

bushes which skirted the forest all round, intermingled with a few taller trees. There, where he could see without being seen, he paused, and crossed his arms upon his chest, looking intently through an aperture in the young green leaves, which afforded a good view of a considerable part of the road. At the end of some three or four minutes after he had taken his station, the cavalcade began to appear. It was headed by a lady on a fine gray horse, which she managed well and gracefully. The description given of her appearance by the wandering musician was quite correct, so far as it went. She was very beautiful; and her skin, most delicately fair and soft, without a wrinkle. Her hair, braided across the forehead, in a mode not usual in England, seemed once to have been nut brown, but was now somewhat streaked with gray. Her figure too was exceedingly fine, though not above the middle height; but it had lost the great delicacy of youth, and assumed the beauties of a more mature age. Her dress was exceedingly plain, consisting of

a gray riding gown, cape, and hood, which had fallen back upon her shoulders; but there was an air of graceful dignity in her whole figure which was not to be mistaken. The expression of her countenance was dignified also; but it was exceedingly grave—grave even to melancholy.

A number of much gayer looking personages succeeded; and some of their dresses were exceedingly beautiful and even splendid; but the eye of the woodman—as that of most other people would have done—fixed upon that lady alone, was never removed from her for an instant, and followed her down the road till the trees shut her from his sight. Then, after pausing for a moment or two, with his gaze firmly fixed upon the ground, he cast himself down in the long grass, and buried his face in his hands.

CHAPTER IX.

The hall was as light as day; for Lord Calverly was fond of a glare. The feast was as delicate as he could have desired; and, even the critical taste of Sir Edward Hungerford found nothing to criticise. The arrangement of the guests, however, was not altogether that which best suited their several inclinations. There were many, with whom we have little or nothing to do, who might, or might not be placed, as they would have placed themselves; but, certainly, with regard to Iola and Chartley, such was not the case; for she was seated between her uncle

and Lord Fulmer, while Chartley was at some distance from her, on the opposite side of the table. Let the mind say what it would, the heart told her, she would rather have had him near. Her ear thirsted for the tones of his voice ; and her eye wandered for a moment, from time to time, to his face, with a glance withdrawn as soon as given, but with an impulse she could not controul. She was very young, and very inexperienced ; and some excuse must be made for her. She wished to do all that was right, to avoid all that was wrong ; but the heart was rebellious, and would have its own way.

Constance, too, could have wished something changed in her position. Sir William Arden, it is true, had contrived to place himself on her left ; and, with that part of the arrangement, she was very well satisfied ; but, Sir Edward Hungerford occupied the other side ; and there was hardly any one in all the hall, whom she would not have preferred.

" Be merry, be merry, my friends," said

excellent Lord Calverly, who perceived that, for some reason or another, his guests were not as cheerful as they might have been. "Let us all be gay; for in these troublous times, when one sits down to the merry evening meal, with friendly faces round us, it is never possible to tell when we shall all meet again."

"By St. Paul, that's a topic well calculated to promote hilarity!" said Sir William Arden, in a low voice to Constance; "and, to say truth, dear lady, the castle hall does not seem to me so gay a place as the abbey refectory."

"I begin to think," said Constance, "that the calm shade of the cloister may, upon the whole, contain more cheerfulness than the laughter-loving world."

"Pooh! We must not let you think so," said Sir William Arden. "Cannot Sir Edward Hungerford persuade you of the contrary? He has been trying, I think."

He spoke in a whisper; and his words produced a slight smile, but no blush upon Constance's face; and her only reply was:

"Hush, hush!"

"Nay, then, if he can't succeed, I must try," continued Sir William; "though, to say truth, it would be somewhat like an old suit of armour dancing a quick step. But, why should you not be happy in the world, as well as your fair cousin?"

"Is she happy?" asked Constance, with a sigh.

"Aye, that is a question, in regard to which I have some doubt," answered the good knight; "but, no more at present: the popinjay is turning round. Now, I'll warrant, he has discussed the whole question of the superiority of cendel over laid silk, with that pretty little thing on his right, who seems to have as many ideas as he has; and I will answer for it, half an hour's talk would make them both bankrupt, so that they have stopped payment for lack of coin."

"It is marvellous hot to-night, sweet lady Constance," said Sir Edward Hungerford, turning towards her. "My cheek burns, till I

am sure I must be rosy as a country justice's serving-man."

"Better that, than white and yellow, like a lump of tallow," replied Sir William Arden, across her. "These people, with their delicate complexions, drive me mad, as if they thought a man, to be a courtier, should look like a whey-faced girl, just emptied from the nursery. And then, they must blush too, and find the air oppressive; but, there is one way of banishing the red rose from your cheek. Faint, Hungerford, faint outright! Then, you'll be as pale as usual."

"Did'st thou ever hear, fair lady, such a blustering old son of Mars, as this?" demanded Sir Edward Hungerford. "He thinks no one can fight but himself, unless he be full of big oaths, with a face like ebony, and a skin like a rhinoceros."

"Nay, I know thou can'st fight, Hungerford, like a man," answered Sir William Arden. "More shame for thee to talk like a woman, and dress like a mountebank. If thou dids't take

as much care of thy pretty person in the field, as thou dost in the hall, thou would'st be a worse soldier than thou art."

"Gallantly said!" replied the other knight; and turning again to Constance, he continued the conversation with her, saying: "He is not bad at main, this worthy man. Though, to hear him talk, we might suppose him one of the devils; but, it is all talk, dear lady. He is at heart as gentle as a lamb, except when he is in the field; and then, of course, he fights for company; but, polish is impossible with him. His mother forgot to lick him when he was young, I suppose; and, so we have the bear in his native state."

Sir William Arden laughed, though he was the object of the sarcasm; and, looking round at Constance, he said:

"It is all quite true, lady, as true as what I said of him. We are famous for drawing each other's characters. So now, you have heard us described each by the other, say which you like best."

"Good, mighty good!" exclaimed Hungerford. "That is an offer of his hand and heart."

"Well, so be it," answered Sir William Arden, with a laugh. "That is something solid at all events. *He* can offer nothing but a shadow in a slashed doublet, a mere voice and a walking suit of clothes. Echo is nothing to him, in respect of thinness; and I should fear his undergoing Narcissus' fate, but, that he loves himself better than even Narcissus, and would not part with his own pretty person for anything else whatsoever, be it substance or shadow. He will never pine himself either into a flower or a watercourse, as those young gentlemen and ladies did in days of old."

"I should be a great fool, if I did," replied Hungerford; "but, if you were to begin to melt, Arden, all the world would thaw; for it is difficult to say, whether your head or your heart is the hardest."

"Why, gentlemen, you are using very bitter words," said the pretty lady, on the other side

of Sir Edward Hungerford. "Really I must appeal to my good Lord Calverly."

"Nay, rather let me appeal to you," said Hungerford, in a tender tone; and thenceforth he continued to talk with her till the supper was over, which was all she wanted.

"That shaft is shot," said Arden, resuming the conversation with Constance, but speaking in a lower tone than before. "You asked but now 'Is she happy?' and good faith she does not look like it. Her lips have hardly moved since we sat down to the board; but, methinks that question might be put of every one round. It is not the gay smile, or the cheerful laugh, that shows a happy heart within; and I doubt much, if you could see into every bosom along these two ranks of human things, whether you would not find some hidden care, or some sorrow that flies the light."

"That is to say," replied Constance, "that every one who mingles with the world finds unhappiness in it: a fine argument to keep me out of a convent, truly. Either your gal-

lantry or your wit halts, Sir William; for, to my knowledge, there is many a happy heart beats in the cloister."

"Are there no masks there?" asked the stout knight. "If not, there are veils, fair Constance; and, take my word for it, sooner or later, there come regrets and repinings, longings to see the world that has been renounced, and pluck some of the fruit of the pleasant tree of knowledge, that bitter sweet, the pleasant berries of which tempt the eye from afar, although there is now no serpent hid amongst the foliage."

"But look at my good aunt, the abbess," answered the young lady. "She has none of these regrets and repinings that you mention. She is always merry, cheerful, contented."

"Ay, but her's is a case by itself," answered Arden. "She can get out when she likes; and a good creature she is. Her life is as easy as a widow's. No, no. Take my advice, and think not of a convent."

"Why, what would you have me do in the

wide world," asked Constance, half gaily, half sadly.

"Why, marry to be sure," replied the good knight, "and have a score of cherub babes, to cheer you with their pleasant faces. Let me tell you, it is like having heaven round your knees, and not a whit the less likely in the end to reach the Heaven over head."

"But suppose no one would have me," answered Constance, with a smile.

"Try all the young fellows first, and then try me," answered Sir William, bluffly, but with a light laugh at the same time, which softened the point of his words; and Constance answered—

"No, no. A woman can try no one. I must be wooed and won."

"On my life if I thought you could," murmured Arden to himself, "I think I would try;" but the words did not reach Constance's ear; and, after a short pause of thought, the old knight said abruptly, "I don't like your fair cousin's looks."

"And yet they are fair looks too," answered Constance.

"Aye, so are my cousin Chartley's," said the knight; "but I don't like his looks either."

"They are gay enough, surely," replied Constance. "See, he is laughing even now."

"Did you ever see a will-o'-the-wisp?" asked Sir William.

"Yes," said Constance. "What of that?"

"They flit over deep morasses and dangerous spots," answered the knight. "Don't you let Chartley's laugh mislead you. See how he holds his head in the air, with his nostril spread, and his lip curling. "Be sure, when he laughs with such a look as that, there is something very bitter at his heart."

"But they say he is half a prisoner here," rejoined Constance. "That is enough to make him sad."

"Would that were all," replied Arden; "but let us talk no more of him. It is your fair cousin I am thinking of. When she sat

opposite to me at the abbey, a week or two ago, her eyes were like stars that glistened up instead of down. Her brow was smooth and clear. Her lip played in smiles with every thought. I would fain know what it is has clouded that ivory brow, what it is weighs down that rosy arch, and sinks the sweeping eye-lashes to her cheek."

"I cannot tell," answered Constance, with a little mental reservation; "but I suppose great changes coming, when they are foreseen, will make the heart somewhat pensive."

"Pensive, but not sorrowful," answered Arden. "Well, well," he added, "I see your uncle moving in his seat, as if we should not be long side by side. Let me see—when you were a little smiling child, just toddling about your nurse's knee, I was in arms, dealing hard blows in more than one stricken field. There is a mighty difference between our ages, some four and twenty years perhaps—Nay, do not be afraid. I am not going to ask you—but methinks, a young thing like you may place

some confidence in a man old enough to be your father; and all I can say is, if you, or your fair cousin, need counsel of a head that has had some experience, or help from an arm none of the weakest, you may rely upon a heart which has been ever believed true to friend and foe, to man or woman. There, my dear child, I have said my say. It is for you to act upon it, as you think fit."

Sunk almost to a whisper with much emotion, the voice of Constance answered—

"I thank you deeply;" and the next moment, according to a bad custom, even then prevalent, the ladies of the party rose, and left the gentlemen to pursue their revel unchecked.

We must go back a little, however; for during the meal we have followed only one little group at that long table. What was the conduct, what were the thoughts of Lord Fulmer, while all this was passing? He sat beside Iola in anguish, the anguish of doubt and jealousy; and, conscious that his mood was

not fitted to win or please, he struggled with it sorely. He determined to use every effort, both to conquer himself, and to gain her love ; but it is difficult to conquer an enemy without when there is an enemy within ; and the very effort embarrassed him. If he sat silent for a minute or two, he was revolving what he should say. When he did speak, it was not the tone or the words of the heart, which came forth ; the whole was studied ; the effort was too evident. He felt it, yet could not help it ; and Iola's reply did not generally aid or encourage him. It was courteous but cold, civil but not kind —very brief too ; and the moment it was uttered, she fell into thought again. It was clear there was a struggle in her mind, as well as his, and the only difference was, that she did not strive to conceal it. He was angry with her and with himself; with her, because she did not put on at least the semblance of regard she did not feel ; with himself, because he knew that his own want of self-command was every moment betraying the interests of a passion

which was growing upon him more and more, even under doubt and disappointment. Still he struggled, still he strove to please, or at least, to amuse; but it was in vain. His words were cold and formal, and Iola was grave, absent, thoughtful, so that no conversation lasted more than a minute. At length he gave it up. He struggled no more. He yielded to the feelings within; but they impelled him in a very different course from that of Iola. She saw, heard, marked, very little of what passed at the table. Buried in her own thoughts, she only roused herself from time to time, to reply to her uncle, who sat at her side, or to answer the abbess who was placed opposite, or to give a momentary timid look towards the face of Chartley.

Fulmer, on the contrary, was full of eager observation, quickened by the passions in his heart. "I will know all," he thought. "I will force Hungerford to tell me all—aye, this very night. I cannot live in this torture any longer? and if I find it as I think, that man shall

answer me with his heart's best blood. What right had he to win the affections of my contracted wife. He must have known that she was so. Everyone knew it; but I will be satisfied. Hungerford shall explain his words before he lays his head upon his pillow."

He could not be content to wait for that explanation, however; and, as I have said, he watched, in order to ascertain, as far as possible, how far the evil, which he suspected, had gone. Three times he saw the eyes of Iola raised for an instant to Chartley's face, and then as speedily withdrawn. Oh, what would he have given, in some mysterious glass, to have seen a picture of the emotions which were passing in her breast. The first time she looked at him, her colour was heightened the moment she withdrew her eyes. He could not tell why; and he puzzled himself to divine the cause. Was it that Chartley was talking with another, and that his tone was gay? Or was it that she found the eyes of the abbess upon her, and blushed from consciousness. The second time she looked that way, a

slight passing smile followed—the mere shadow of a smile. Was it that Chartley, fallen into a fit of absence, committed some strange error, which made those around him laugh. The next glance she gave, left her in deeper thought than ever; and to him her eyes seemed to swim in bright dew: but she dropped the deep veil of long silken lashes over the glistening drop; and it was hidden.

In the mean time, what marked he in Chartley's conduct? It was the same in some respects as Iola's, but different in others. He often looked to the spot where she was seated; but it was in a calmer, firmer, less timid manner. Once or twice his gaze was earnest, intent, full of deep thought. There was no levity in it, none of the confidence of knowing that he was loved. It was a look of almost painful interest, deep, tender, grave; and once he fixed his eyes upon Fulmer himself, and gazed at him long, notwithstanding an angry expression which came upon the young lord's face. Busied altogether with what was passing in his own mind, Chartley saw not that irritable

look, never fancied that it was called up by his own. He scanned every feature of his face, as if he were scrutinizing some inanimate object which could not perceive or comprehend the examination it was undergoing. And yet that gaze almost drove Fulmer mad; and even the way in which it was withdrawn, the fit of thought which succeeded, and then the start, and the resumption of conversation with those around, all irritated the young man more.

Fortunately, some time elapsed before the gentlemen there present were left without the restraint of ladies' presence; for Fulmer had time to recover himself; and, though still highly irritated, to recollect what was due to Iola, to himself, and to his entertainer. He resolved to bridle his passion, and to guide it; and, could he have kept the resolutions which he formed—he did not as the reader will see—though not altogether good ones, they were much better than the wild impulses of passion.

"There must be no quarrel *about her*," he thought. "I must not mingle her name in our

enmity—I have no right to do that. 'Tis easy to provoke him upon some other subject; nor will I too hastily do that, for the good old lord's sake. I will irritate him by degrees, till the actual offence comes from him; and then to justify myself with my sword is a right. I can do it with all courtesy too; and I will."

If man's resolutions are generally rendered vain and fruitless, by the force of circumstances, when they affect things over which he has no control, it is sad to think that they should be so often rendered ineffectual, by passions, when they refer only to his own conduct, over which he should have the mastery. So, however, it is often—almost always—I had well nigh said, ever. It was not otherwise with Fulmer. His resolutions passed away, under the heat of his temper, like the shadowy clouds of morning. Ere five minutes were over, he was in full career to irritate, if not to insult, Chartley. His resolutions to be courteous, to be moderate, were forgotten; and his tone was very offensive. But the calm indifference of man-

ner on Chartley's part, which it provoked him, frustrated his purpose. His rival, for as such he now fully looked upon him, heard any words he addressed to him calmly, replied to them briefly, and then seemed to withdraw his thoughts from him altogether. It was impossible to engage him in any irritating conversation, his answers were so short, so tranquil, so conclusive; and Fulmer, driven at length to seek more plain and open means of offence, began to touch upon the cause of Chartley's having fallen under the king's displeasure, thinking that thus, at least, he should draw him forth from his reserve. But here old Lord Calverly at once interposed.

"Nay, nay, my noble friend," he said. "These are subjects that are never spoken of, except when they are matters of mere business: but methinks it is time to seek repose. My noble Lord Chartley, I will once more conduct you to your lodging. After to-night, you will be able, methinks, to find your way yourself;" and he at once rose from the table.

CHAPTER X.

EACH of the guests retired to his chamber; but, for some little time, there was a considerable degree of bustle and movement in the castle, pages and servants hurrying to and fro in attendance upon their masters, and serving men clearing away the dishes from the hall, while scullions scraped the trenchers, and the pantry-men cleaned out the cups. Such operations however were not long in the performance; and gradually the whole building resumed its quiet. A light might be seen in a window here and there; and a lamp, which burned all night long

in the high tower, served as a sort of beacon to any traveller wandering in the darkness, showing him afar where Chidlow castle stood. The battlements all around were dark and solitary; for there were very strict laws at that time in force, against collecting what might be considered a garrison, in the fortified houses of the nobility, or maintaining, except in a few special cases, watch and ward within the old baronial castles. The policy of Richard, indeed, seems to have been somewhat similar to that which was pursued in France, nearly two centuries later, by the famous Cardinal de Richelieu; and he evidently aimed at breaking down the feudal power, which had often rendered the great barons such formidable enemies of the crown. He lived not long enough, indeed, to carry out his object, or to enforce his laws; but still the proclamation was in force against giving badges and liveries to retainers, or, in other words, against maintaining a regular armed force, arrayed and organised under certain symbols, and independent of the crown. This law, it

is true, was openly violated by many. Every great house in the land was filled with armed men; badges were retained, and displayed, in various instances; and many a castle was as strictly guarded as if it had been a royal fortress. But all, who sought favour or courtly advancement, were scrupulous to observe the king's will; and, as Lord Calverly was one of these, all outward signs of military precaution had been given up. The chief cannonier had become the master porter; and the warders were now called porter's men. The great gates, however, were still closed, bolted, and locked, the drawbridge raised, and the portcullis let down at the hour of ten; and the posterns were shut an hour earlier; but, in every other respect, defensive measures, and above all, military display, were abandoned; and an appearance of security was assumed, which, in truth, no one felt in England, during the short reign of Richard III.

All then was tranquil and quiet in Chidlow castle by half an hour before midnight; and, al-

though it was evident that some were still watchers within its walls and towers, yet the greater part of the guests were sound asleep, and almost all the others preparing for repose.

At about a quarter to twelve however, Lord Fulmer, with a lamp in his hand, issued forth from his sleeping chamber, and walked along the exceedingly narrow passage into which it opened. Our ancestors of that age, and of the ages before them, were not very careful to provide broad corridors or staircases for their guests. The greater and the lesser halls, the gallery, if a castle had one, several nameless chambers—which were frequently to be found in what poetically would be called, the lady's bower, but which about that time was more generally denominated, the lady's lodging—and, in short, all rooms of state were spacious and magnificent enough; but many of the bedrooms were exceedingly small; and, where they were on a larger scale, for the reception of more distinguished guests, the neighbouring passages were curtailed in proportion.

Along this passage then walked the young nobleman, with a slow and thoughtful step. He had had time for meditation; and passion had somewhat cooled down. His irritation had taken a more gloomy and stern character; but it was not the less persisting. "I will know all," he thought, "and then judge and act."

Turning sharply to the right, at the end of the first ten or fifteen yards, he entered and crossed a large sort of vestibule, occupying one half of the space in one of the flanking towers. It had two windows in it, through one of which the moon was shining brightly, marking the stone floor with the chequered shadows of the leaden frame work. He passed on however, and then, turning to his left, paused and opened a door, which admitted him to a little ante-room. Two or three small beds were ranged around, of that kind, called by the French, "*lit de sangle*;" but they were not occupied; for their intended tenants, consisting of a page and two ordinary attendants, were seated at a little table in the middle of the

room, gambling with dice. They all started up, however, when the young nobleman entered: and, in answer to his question, whether Sir Edward had retired to sleep, replied:

"Oh, dear no, my lord. He will not go to bed for some time;" and the page, stepping forward, opened the door of the inner chamber, saying aloud, "Lord Fulmer, sir."

On advancing into the room, while the boy held back the tapestry, Fulmer found Sir Edward Hungerford, with another person, standing before a table, on which was spread out a large piece of violet coloured satin, whereunto were being applied, by the inferior personage, an enormous pair of shears. The entrance of the young nobleman made them both start; and the first exclamation of Sir Edward, was "My God, you've cut it askew. Heaven and earth, what shall we do now! There will never be enough in that corner to purfle the sleeves."

"I beg your worship's pardon," replied the other, without taking any more notice of Lord Fulmer than his master had done. "There

will be quite enough. If I cut it slant so, from the corner to the middle, it will just leave what is needful for the bands."

"I want to speak with you, Hungerford," said the young nobleman. "I pray you, send this fellow away."

"Wait a moment, wait a moment," replied the knight. "This is the most important thing in life. You can't imagine what trouble it has given us to devise.—Now, cut away, Master Graine, and let me see how you will manage it?"

"Oh, quite easily," answered the other; and, delicately using his shears, he cut the satin straight across, and then divided one part of it into two, from which he again pared two long strips, pointing to the whole in triumph, and saying, "There, worshipful sir, I told you—"

"Yes, yes, I see, I see," said Hungerford, in a meditative tone. "It is a great question settled. Now, take them away; and, remember, I shall want it by to-morrow night."

The man bowed and withdrew; and then, for the first time, Sir Edward turned to Lord Fulmer, and invited him to be seated, saying, "That was a momentous business, Fulmer; and your imprudent entrance so suddenly, had well nigh spoiled all."

"I did not know that you were engaged upon matters of life and death," replied Fulmer bitterly, lifting up the tapestry at the same time, to see that the tailor had closed the door behind him.

"I have somewhat of less importance to say," he then continued, seating himself, "but still of some moment to me."

"What is it, my dear lord?" asked Hungerford, taking a chair opposite. "I can conceive nothing very important, when compared with the cutting out of a surcoat. However, I have seen that you have been uneasy—or to speak more accurately, nearly as hot in your skin as a poor devil of a lollard, whom I once beheld, when I was a boy, burned in a pitch barrel. He looked just as uncomfortable as you did at supper, when one could get a sight of his face

through the flames. I wish you could bear as easy a mind as I do, and see the little value of things that men make themselves uncomfortable about—and angry about into the bargain, it would seem."

"Nay, I am not in the least angry," replied Fulmer, who believed he was speaking truth. "I merely want to hear some simple facts to which you alluded somewhat mysteriously this morning. Marriage, you know, Hungerford," he continued, affecting a light and jesting tone, the better to conceal the bitter feelings within, "marriage, you know, is a matter of destiny; but, when a man is about to unite his fate to a fair lady, it is quite as well that he should be made aware of all previous passages, in order that he may take his measures accordingly."

"Upon my word, I disagree with you," answered Hungerford, with a smile. "No man should ever do anything that can make him uneasy. Calm and perfect indifference to all things in life, is the only means of obtaining that greatest blessing in life—tranquillity. If

we have a stock of enthusiasm, which must be spent upon something, it is much better to spend it upon what you call trifles, because, if any misadventure happens, the evil is easily repaired. Now, if when you came in just now, you had made Master Graine irremidiably damage that piece of satin, which I should have considered the greatest misfortune in the world, I could send a man on horseback to London or York, to get me another piece; and thus the evil is cured. But, if a man cuts another man's throat, or makes his wife hate him by black looks and cold words, he cannot give his friend a new throat, or send to York for a new love."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Fulmer, sharply. "I wish to Heaven you would be serious, but for a moment."

"I am perfectly serious," replied Hungerford. "The only question is, which is the best philosophy, yours or mine? However, each man knows his own nature. What do you wish to ask me?"

"Simply this," answered Fulmer. "What is the previous acquaintance, to which you alluded with a sneer, this morning, between my contracted wife, the Lady Iola St. Leger, and that very noble and excellent gentleman, the Lord Chartley?"

"With a sneer, my dear lord!" exclaimed Hungerford. "See what it is to be of an imaginative disposition. I sneered not at all."

"Then the simple question," rejoined Fulmer, restraining his feelings with a great effort, "what know you of their acquaintance?"

"Mighty little, my good lord," replied Sir Edward Hungerford, who was, to say the truth, a little amused by the eager impetuosity of his companion, and somewhat inclined to spur him on, merely for the joke's sake; but, knowing that the affair might have very serious consequences, he kept to the strict truth, and even within it, though he could not refrain from playing a little with Fulmer's impatience. "Be it known unto you then," he continued; "that

somewhere about a fortnight ago--let me see. It was on Monday ——"

"The date matters little," said Fulmer, moodily. "All I want are the facts."

"Well, about a fortnight ago, then," continued Hungerford, "as I was riding from London, I chanced to stumble upon my good friend, Lord Chartley, at the little inn at Kimbolton. The whole place was occupied by himself and his people; but he kindly made room for me, and gave me an excellent good supper, prepared by his own cook—The snipes were excellent; and there was an alaud of salmon, I never tasted anything better —"

"Well, well, what then?" said Fulmer, quickly.

"Why, I thought him too good a companion to be parted with, easily," said Hungerford. "So, we passed the evening in talking of Bohemia, where we had last met, and drawing savoury comparisons between the cookery of that rude land, and good old England. Finding we were travelling the same way, I joined

myself to his train, which was discreet and well ordered, having a friar to bless the meat, and a cook to cook it. Good faith, it was a pleasant journey; and, I put myself in mind of the gentleman who gave crumbs to Lazarus; for, I took care to be dressed in purple and fine linen, and with him, I fared sumptuously every day. At length, one evening, after having dallied away some time at Tamworth, we stopped to sup at the abbey of St. Clare—an abbey of nuns you know—"

"Yes, yes. I know all about it," replied Fulmer. "Go on."

"I had no inclination to go on, when I was there, I can assure you, my good lord," said Hungerford, laughing; "for right happily did the merry little abbess entertain us, and not only supped with us herself, in the stranger's refectory, but brought a prioress as deaf as a post, and the two pretty cousins, her nieces, Iola and Constance. The Lady Iola sat next to my noble friend; and, as a courteous gentleman, he did his best to entertain her, and, to

my thinking, succeeded. I could have made up my mind to lodge there for the night; but, Chartley was peremptory to go forward to Hinckley. So, after supper, we rode on. The friar indeed, remained behind, pretending to be sick; and, when we had got some two miles through the wood, Chartley suddenly perceived —how, I know not; for it was dark enough amongst the trees—that some one had left the train. It turned out to be one of Sir Charles Weinant's men; for that smooth gentleman was with us—playing the traitor, if I mistake not. However, Chartley set spurs to his horse to catch the deserter, telling us to ride on, and he would overtake us. We good people did as he bade; but we got to Hinckley before him, and were roused early the next morning from our beds, by news that his lordship was in danger, and needed our instant help. Arden was in the saddle in a moment; and away we went pell mell, getting what intelligence we could, till we came to the wood which covers the hills over the abbey. There we found the

whole place full of soldiers, searching a bit of the forest ground, for whom or what, we could not learn ; and, at length, riding round between the wood and the abbey, we found Chartley, his tawny Moor, and half a dozen woodmen, keeping a pass between two banks against Catesby, and a good number of the king's soldiers."

He paused, and rubbed his temple, till Lord Fulmer exclaimed :—

" Well, what then ?"

" Why, that is all I know, of my own knowledge," answered Hungerford, " except that Chartley's coat seemed somewhat worse for a night's lodging in the forest."

" There is something more, Sir Edward Hungerford," said Fulmer, in a low, stern, bitter tone. " I must know it."

" Perhaps it is better to tell the rest," said the knight ; " although, you must remember, my good lord, that I now speak only what I have gathered from other people's conversation. Of course, Chartley had not planted himself there,

and embroiled himself with the king's troops, for nothing; and I made out, that his resistance was offered to cover the retreat of a lady into the convent. She had by some chance, been out in the wood at night, and was cut off by the soldiers, who were searching, it seems, for good old Doctor Morton, the bishop of Ely. Chartley had met with her, and gallantly escorted her through the midst of the men; but, to do him all justice, he spoke of her with knightly reverence; and moreover, I should have told you before, that this friar of his, who, as I said blessed the meat, was none other than the good bishop himself, in effecting whose escape, Chartley had the principal share. Thus, he had a personal interest in the whole matter."

Fulmer pressed his hand upon his brow, and murmured: "Alone with him in the wood all night!"

"Nay, nay, my good lord; do not so disturb yourself," said Hungerford. "Chartley is a man of very peculiar notions, and doubtless ——"

"Pshaw!" said Lord Fulmer. "I do not

disturb myself in the least. Doubtless, he is full of courtesy, and a man of high honour—All night in the wood with him!—I will go out upon the ramparts and walk. The moon is shining clear."

"You had better keep out of the moonlight, my good lord," said Hungerford, carelessly. "Stay, I will throw on a hood and come with you."

"I would rather be alone," answered Lord Fulmer; and taking up his lamp, he left the room.

Hurrying along the narrow passage, he soon reached that large, open sort of vestibule, which I have mentioned, in one of the square flanking towers; and there he paused, and stood for a moment or two with his eyes fixed upon the ground in deep thought. After a while, a sound, as of voices singing, came upon his ear. At first, it did not wake him from his reverie; but, gradually it seemed to steal upon his senses and call his thoughts, at least in some degree, from that which had previously occu-

pied them. There were seats on either side; and, setting down the lamp on one of them, he opened the window which looked to the south west, and through which the moonlight was streaming. The music then became more distinct, though it evidently proceeded from a great distance. It was calm, and sweet, and solemn: a strain of exquisite melody, not so rich and full in the harmony, indeed, as the anthems or masses of the Roman church, but yet apparently of a religious character. It seemed a hymn; and, after listening for a moment, Fulmer said:—

"This is strange! What can it mean? I will go forth and listen. It seems to come from the wood, there. I shall hear better on the battlements."

Descending the narrow winding staircase, which terminated the passage about ten yards beyond the door of his own apartments, he entered the inner court, and thence through a tall archway, reached the outer court, beyond which lay the ramparts. Then ascending by the

steps to the top of the wall, he walked round, till he had reached a spot exactly below the window in the square tower. The music, however, had ceased ; and he listened for some minutes in vain, though he thought he heard a murmur of many voices speaking or reading altogether.

The momentary excitement of curiosity passed away ; and, sitting down upon a stone bench, placed for the warders' temporary repose, he leaned his arm upon the battlement, and returned to his dark thoughts. Still, the calm and solemn scene around, the grey landscape lying stretched out afar in the moonlight, the waving lines of hill and dale faintly traced in the dim obscurity, the light mist lying in the hollows, a bright gleaming line in the distance where the rays fell upon some sheet of water, the tall dark towers of the castle rising by his side, the blue sky over head, flooded in the south west with silver radiance, and in the north and east speckled with gemlike stars, the motionless air, the profound silence, seemed to

calm and still his angry feelings, if not to soften, or remove them. There are things in life, which, like frost, harden while they tranquilize. Such was not altogether the case with him; but still the root of bitterness was in his heart.

He paused and thought; but before many minutes had passed, the music burst forth again, rising and falling in solemn swell and cadence: evidently many voices singing some holy song. It came from far; no articulate sounds reached his ear; but music is a language—a language understood by the whole earth—speaking grand truths to the heart; wordless, but more eloquent than all words. If he was not softened before, he was softened now; if his spirit before had been tied down to earthly passions, it was now, for a time at least, elevated above himself.

I have said 'for a time;' for Richard had described him rightly. He was a man of varying moods, naturally generous, high minded, kind, but subject to all the impulses of the clay, and in whom there was an everlasting warfare between the mortal and immortal. He thought of Iola,

and her beauty, and the dreams which in his imaginative heart he had dreamed of her; and still that wild and thrilling strain sounded in his ears amidst the solemn scene, raising his feelings up, above selfishness, and worldly lessons, to generous feelings, and noble aspirations. He thought what a grand, though melancholy joy it would be, to give her happiness even by the sacrifice of his own. Something of pride might mingle with it too; for, in the picture of the mind, Iola was seen confessing that she had misunderstood him, and admiring where she could not love; but still it was not a low pride; and he felt more satisfied, more at peace with himself. His eyes wandered over the space before him, and he recollected how he had seen it that very day, as he rode towards the castle, lighted up with sunshine, bursting forth into green life, and full of the song of birds. Now it was all grey and still, with no sounds, but that faint echo-like hymn, pouring on the air like the dirge of departed hopes. It seemed a picture

of his own fate, so lately lighted up with bright expectations, and now all dark and cold.

Suddenly, on the green slope beyond the walls, he saw a figure—a woman's figure, clad in white. With a quiet gliding motion, it walked quickly on; and ere he had recovered from his surprise, it had disappeared amongst the first trees at the nearest angle of the wood. He thought it looked like Iola, that its movements were like hers, so easy, so effortless, so graceful. He turned towards the place where he knew her chamber was, and gazed up. There was a light still burning there; and as he gazed, a female figure passed across the window.

CHAPTER XI.

Had he been chief warder of a beleaguered fort, Lord Fulmer could not have examined every gate and sally port of the castle more carefully than he did, when he descended from the walls. The figure which he had beheld, had evidently seemed to come from the castle; but how it had issued forth he could not divine. Every postern was barred, bolted, and chained; and the porter, and the porter's men were all snoring in their dens, of which he had occular proof before he retired. The fat old porter, whom he had roused and

informed of what he had seen, treated the matter lightly, saying, half sleeping, half waking, it was impossible: it must have been the moonlight on the bank, or a white thorn coming into flower. But, when Fulmer reminded him that the month of May was still far off, and told him he had seen the figure move for some distance, he quietly replied—

"Then it must have been a spirit. There are plenty hereabout;" and, lying down on his pallet again, he was asleep before the young nobleman had quitted the lodge.

Fulmer almost felt inclined to believe that the porter's last supposition was correct, and that the music he had heard was a strain of unearthly melody. Perhaps there have been few ages in the world's history, more grossly superstitious than those which immediately preceded the reformation. The process of darkening the human mind, by which alone the errors of the church of Rome can be maintained, had been going on for so many centuries, that it had almost reached completeness; and the

art of printing, the precursor of Luther, had not yet fulfilled its mission; and, though here and there a few great minds were to be found, which shook off the garment of sup erstition with which the papal church had liveried the world—though Wicliffe and John Huss had given the first terrible blow to Rome, yet her partizans laboured but the more strenuously, to retain for her the shadowy empire she had created. At this very time new saints were made, and their days appointed to be honoured; and the festivals of old saints were, in many instances, ordered to receive double celebration. In England especially, every false, abominable, and idolatrous dogma was more sternly and clearly defined, in order to prevent the escape of the Wicliffites through any ambiguity of language. It was solemnly declared that not one particle of the sacramental bread remained bread after consecration, that every drop of the cup was blood. Pilgrimages, the worship of saints, the adoration of the cross and of relics, were en-

joined under the penalty of fire; and everything that could lead or tend to superstition was encouraged and upheld. Taught to believe so much of the supernatural within the church, it is not wonderful that the great mass of the people, high and low, should believe in much of the supernatural beyond the church, and that the priest should encourage them in so doing.

Nevertheless, Lord Fulmer was by no means one of the most superstitious of his class. To doubt the occasional apparition of spirits, or even devils, he would not have ventured; but to believe that he had seen one, was very different; and, not knowing what to think, or what solution to give to the mystery, he retired to his chamber, and lay down to rest. Sleep did not visit his eyes for some hours; but still, he rose early, roused his attendants in the ante-chamber, and dressed for the day. He then gazed forth from the window for a moment or two; but, as something passed before his eyes, he turned round with a

sudden start, and a flushed cheek, and went out.

He passed quickly, through the courts, towards the walls; but, at the foot of the steps, he paused and thought, for a moment or two, and then mounted to the battlements with a slower step and more tranquil air.

About fifty yards in advance was Chartley, the man he sought, walking tranquilly towards him, with his arms folded on his chest, and his eyes bent down in meditation. They were now alone together on the walls; and Fulmer thought, that there could be no better time for saying what he proposed to say than that moment. His mood, however, had varied from that of the night before; and, at first, he addressed Lord Chartley courteously enough.

"Good morning, my lord," he said. "Summer is coming on us with a swallow's wing;" and he turned to walk back with his companion.

"It is indeed very warm," answered Chart-

ley, mildly; "and the air here seems temperate and fine."

There, the conversation halted for a moment; for Lord Fulmer made no answer, and walked on in silence, till they had nearly reached the angle of the wall. There was a struggle going on within: a struggle for calmness; for he felt agitation growing upon him.

At length, however, he said—

"I find, my lord, that you are well acquainted with the Lady Iola St. Leger, and that you rendered her some service, a little time ago."

"Service of no great importance," replied Chartley; "and which any gentleman would render to any lady."

"You are, I suppose, aware that she is contracted to me as my future wife," said Lord Fulmer, turning his eyes full upon Chartley's face.

"I was not aware of it at the time," answered Chartley, holding his head very high. "I am now."

"That near connexion," continued Fulmer,

"not only gives me a right, but requires me, my good lord, to inquire into the nature of the service that you rendered her, that I may"—he added with a sort of sarcastic smile, "that I may proportion my thanks to its degree."

"I require no thanks," answered Chartley, coldly. "Of what is required of you, my lord, I am no judge. Your right to make the inquiry, I am not called upon to consider; and the lady herself will doubtless give you what information she thinks fit upon the subject."

Fulmer strove to put down the wrath which was rising up in his bosom; but yet there was a great degree of sharpness in his tone, as he replied—

"My right to make the inquiry, my good lord, you *are* called upon to consider; for I make that inquiry of you."

"Then I refuse to answer it," replied Chartley. "If a gentleman have rendered a lady service in any way, it is not his business to speak of it. She may do so, if she thinks proper; but his part is different."

"Then, my lord," replied Fulmer, "if you give me not account in one way, you must in another;" and he set his teeth hard, as if to keep down the more violent words which were ready to spring to his lips.

Chartley laughed.

"On my life," he said, "this is the strangest sort of gratitude which it has been my lot to meet with in this wonderful world! Here is a man, comes to give me thanks, and then calls me to a rude account, because I will not tell him, why! What is the meaning of all this, my lord? Your strange conduct certainly requires explanation—far more than any part of mine, which has always been very open and simple."

"Oh, if you think it requires explanation," exclaimed Lord Fulmer, readily, "I am quite ready to yield it, after the fashion that I hinted."

"Is that a worthy answer, Lord Fulmer?" demanded Chartley. "You seem determined to find cause of quarrel with me, and can meet with no more reasonable pretext, than that I

once did some slight service to a lady affianced to you."

"Exactly so!" replied Lord Fulmer, dryly.

"Well then," cried Chartley, tossing back his head, "I answer, I will not quarrel with you on such ground. Charge me fairly—accuse me of any wrong that I have done you, or any mortal man, or woman either; and I will either clear myself, or make reparation with my person at the sword's point; but I will not bring a lady's name in question, by quarrelling with any man, on such a plea as this you bring. —If you have aught to say against me, say it boldly."

"Have you not already brought her name in question, by passing one whole night with her in the woods of Atherston?" demanded Fulmer sternly. "Have you not made it a matter of light talk with lighter tongues—"

"Stay, stay!" exclaimed Chartley. "I do not rightly understand you. Do you mean to say, that I ever have lightly used that lady's

ame—that I have ever made it the subject of my conversation at all?"

"No," answered Fulmer, gravely. "That I cannot say; but I aver that you have given occasion for its being talked of by others, in remaining with her one whole night, as I have said, in the woods of Atherston."

Chartley laughed again.

"He would have had me leave her to her fate, in the midst of the wood!" he exclaimed; "or else have had her fall into the hands of Catesby's rude soldiery, or the ruffian mercenaries of Sir John Godscroft, who were, even at the moment I met her, daintily engaged in burning down the buildings on the abbey green! By St. Peter, the man seems to have a rare notion of courtesy towards a lady!—Let me tell you, Lord Fulmer, that had I left her, she must have encountered those who would have treated her somewhat more roughly than I did.—Stay, stay, a moment. I have not yet done. You say that I have given occasion for people to talk lightly of her. Give

me the name of one who has dared, even by a word, to couple her name to mine in aught that is not pure—aye, even in a jest; and I will make him eat his words or send him to the devil a day before his time."

Fulmer gazed down upon the ground in moody silence. "There may be words," he said at length, "which, separate from the tone and manner, imply but little, but which, eked out with nods and smiles and twinklings of the eye, would go far to blast the fairest reputation. In a word, Lord Chartley, I will not have it said, that the woman I make my wife, has passed the whole night alone, in a wild wood, with any living man."

"Then do not make her your wife;" answered Chartley. "That is easily settled."

"There is another way of settling it," replied Lord Fulmer, bitterly, "by cutting the throat of him who has done so with her."

"So, so, are you there?" answered Chartley, now made angry, in spite of himself. "If such be the case, my lord, I will not baulk you. I

might refuse your appeal, as a prisoner in ward. I might refuse it, as having no reasonable grounds; but I will not do so; and satisfaction you shall have of the kind you demand; for no earthly man shall say I feared him. But this, my good lord, is not without a condition. It shall be fully and entirely known, how and why you have forced me to this—what is the quarrel you have fixed upon me—and why I have consented. All this shall be clearly stated and proclaimed, for my own character's sake. This I have a right to demand."

"But the lady's fair name!" exclaimed Fulmer, alarmed at the condition.

"Who is it that blackens it?" demanded Chartley, fiercely. "Not I, but you, Lord Fulmer. I proclaim her pure, and good, and true, to you, to me, and all men; and you, if any one, shall stand forth as her calumniator, in forcing this unjust quarrel upon me. I cast the responsibility upon you; and now I leave you."

"Stay, sir, stay," exclaimed Fulmer, driven

almost to fury. "You have called me calumniator; and you shall answer for that word, or I will brand you as a coward in every court of Europe."

"Methinks you would get but few to believe you," replied Chartley, proudly; "but let me tell you, if you dare venture to use that term to me, before any competent witnesses, I will punish you on the spot as you deserve. You think, my lord, by taking me here in private, to gratify your malice while you conceal your own weakness, and to leave, perhaps, the blame upon me; but you are mistaken, if you think you have to do with a feeble minded and passionate boy like yourself."

Fulmer lost all command over himself; and drawing his sword at once, though close before the castle windows, he exclaimed, "Draw! I will bear no more."

But Chartley was comparatively cool, while his adversary was blind with passion; and, springing upon him with a bound, he put aside the raised point with his hand, and wrenched the

sword from his grasp, receiving a slight wound in doing so. Then, holding his adversary in a firm grasp, he cast the weapon from him over the castle wall.

"For shame," he said, after a moment's pause, "for shame, Lord Fulmer! Go back, sir, to the castle; and, if you have those honourable feelings, those somewhat fantastic and imaginative notions, which I have heard attributed to you, think, over your own conduct this morning—aye, think over the doubts and suspicions, unjust, and base, and false as they are, in which such conduct has arisen, and feel shame for both. I am not apt to be a vain man; but, when I scan my own behaviour in the events which have given rise to all this rancour on your part, and compare it with your conduct now, I feel there is an immeasurable distance between us; and I regret, for that sweet lady's sake, that she is bound by such ties to such a man."

"You have the advantage, my lord, you have the advantage," repeated Fulmer, doggedly.

"The time may come when it will be on my part."

"I think not," answered Chartley, with one of his light laughs; for we are told God defends the right; and I will never do you wrong."

Thus saying, he turned upon his heel, descended the steps, and walked back into the castle.

Fulmer followed with a slow and sullen step, his eyes bent down upon the ground, and his lips, from time to time, moving. He felt all that had occurred the more bitterly, as he was conscious that it was his own fault. He might feel angry with Chartley; his pride might be bitterly mortified; he might have every inclination to cast the blame upon others; but there was one fact he could not get over, one truth, which, at the very first, carried self censure home. He had violated all his own resolutions; he had given way to passion, when he had resolved to be calm and cool; and this conviction, perhaps, led him some steps on the path of regret for his whole conduct. At all

events, passing through his ante-room without speaking to any of his servants, he entered his own chamber, and cast himself down upon a seat, to scrutinize the acts he had committed.

CHAPTER XII.

Let us return to the close of supper on the preceding night. The abbess and her two fair nieces, with some other ladies who had been congregated in the castle, retired, first, to a little hall, above that where they had supped, and then, after a short conversation, separated into various parties, and sought the chambers where they were to take repose. Iola, Constance, and their aunt, retired to the bed-room of the former, before they parted for the night, and sat and talked for a few minutes in a calm tone.

"My dear child you look sad," said the abbess, "has any thing vexed you?"

"No, dear aunt, nothing more than usual," answered Iola, forcing a laugh. "I suppose a man may be merry enough, when he knows he is to be hanged at the end of a year; but the case alters, when he finds himself at the day before the hanging."

"A hang dog simile, my child," said the abbess; "but fie, Iola, put away such thoughts. Marriage is an honourable state, though it lacks the sanctity of devotion; and I doubt not, it is a very comfortable condition, though, good lack, I have never tried it, and never shall now;" and she laughed a little at the thought. "Well, well, methinks you ought to be content," she continued; "for, certainly he is a very fair and handsome young man."

"Is he?" said Iola, in an indifferent tone. "I thought he was dark."

"Well, his hair and eyes are dark," replied her aunt, "and his skin somewhat brownish; but what I meant was, that he is good looking

and manly. I do not think your fair men, with pink cheeks, handsome for my part, though I take but little heed to men's beauty—why should I? However, I say he is as handsome a young man for a husband, as woman would wish to choose."

"I must have him for a husband whether I choose or not," answered Iola; "so, handsome or ugly, it comes to the same."

Constance thought for a moment, and then said, in a quiet tone, "I do not think he is so handsome as Lord Chartley;" and she gave a quick glance towards her cousin's face as she spoke.

Iola's check was crimson in a moment; but she said nothing; and the abbess exclaimed gaily, "Oh, this world, this world. I see it will steal your heart away from us, Constance. No more vows and veils for you now. Well, do as you like, my child. I have found a convent life a very happy one—perhaps, because there was no choice; and I resolved to make the best of it; and, if Iola would take her

aunt's advice, she would look upon marriage as much the same, and make the best of it too."

With this piece of exceeding good counsel, the worthy lady rose and left her two fair companions; and, no sooner was she gone, than Constance moved closer to her cousin, and, laying her hand upon Iola's, looked tenderly into her face.

"Give me your heart, Iola," she said. "You have withdrawn your confidence from me; and your heart must have gone with it."

Iola bent down her forehead on her cousin's shoulder, and wept without reply.

"Nay, dear cousin," continued Constance, "if not for my sake—if not for old affection's sake, and for love, which, unlike the love of the world, can never weary or wax old—for your own sake, give me your confidence as in days of yore. Tell me your heart's feelings and your mind's thoughts; for, be sure that, there are few, if any, situations in life, in which counsel cannot bring comfort."

"I will, I will, Constance," said Iola, wiping

away the tears. "These foolish drops," she continued, "spring but from a momentary weakness, my Constance. I have borne up and struggled hard till now. It is kindness that shakes me."

"But then tell me," said her cousin, "tell me whence they spring, Iola. I see you are unhappy—miserable. I would fain help you, or, at least, console you; but I know not how."

"What would you have, dear Constance?" said Iola, mournfully. "You must see it—I love him not—I can never love him; and yet in a few days, I know not how soon, I must vow at the altar to love him for ever. Is not that a hard fate, dear Constance?"

"It might be worse," answered Constance.

"How worse?" demanded Iola in surprise.

"If you loved another," said her cousin, slowly and sorrowfully.

Again the crimson glow spread over Iola's brow and cheek, followed by a warm gush of

tears; but Constance twined her arms round her, saying:—

"I have your secret now, dear Iola. That is over. Let us speak freely of all things. But first, for some comfort—though it be but a reprieve. My uncle told me just before supper, that the king's consent to the celebration of the marriage has not been obtained; that Richard begs him to delay, till he and the queen can be present. It may be long first; for poor queen Ann, they declare, is gone mad upon the death of the prince. It must be some months; for they cannot be present at a marriage in mourning. But, what is very strange, my uncle seemed well satisfied with the delay."

Iola sat and gazed at her as she spoke, with a look of wonder, as if the tidings were so unexpected and incredible even to hope, that she could hardly comprehend what she heard. The next instant, however, she started up and clapped her hands with a look of child-like joy.

"A reprieve!" she cried. "Oh, it is everything. It is everything. It is comfort. It is life. It is hope!" and then, casting herself upon her cousin's neck, she wept again, sobbing as if her heart would break.

Constance tried to calm her; but her words seemed not to reach Iola's mind; for, when the tears had had their way, she sprang up, clasping her hands again, and crying, with the same radiant look, "Months, did you say? Oh, moments were a blessing—Who can tell what months may bring forth?—They have sometimes swept away empires. Now, we shall have time to think, and speak, and act. Before, I thought it was useless to take counsel even with you, dear Constance; for what could counsel avail, when the event was hurrying on with such terrible rapidity. It seemed like one of those mountains of snow, which I have heard of, falling in the Alps, where, though they be seen thundering down, 'tis vain to fly, or move, or think; for their coming is too rapid, their

extent too wide; and all that remains, is to call upon the name of God and die."

"Good Heaven, what an image!" exclaimed Constance; "and have you really suffered all this, my poor Iola?—But, now tell me what has passed between you and Chartley?"

"Nothing," replied Iola; and, be it remarked, that at every word she uttered, her spirits seemed to revive more and more, as if nothing but the intolerable burden which had been cast upon them, had been able to keep them down, and that, as soon as it was removed, they sprang up again fresher than ever. "Nothing at all, but what I have told you, dear Constance. For the world, I would not have told you a falsehood."

"Then, nothing has been said, to make you think he loves you as you love him?" asked Constance.

Iola blushed a little, and looked down; but, there was an expression of arch meaning about her smiling lips; and she replied:—

"Nothing has been said, it is true, dear

Constance; but a good deal has been looked. How the tone, how the eyes change the whole meaning of cold words. I have not loved, unbeloved, I hope—I trust—I believe. Men are deceivers, you will say, and in nought more deceitful than their looks. Perhaps you will tell me too, that Chartley, this very night, was gay and joyful, that he laughed and talked with those around him, not at all like a disappointed lover. But he was not joyful at his heart, Constance. I watched and saw it all. I saw that the laugh was forced, the merriment unreal. I marked the sudden fit of thought, the gloomy look that chequered the smile, the head held high, and the curling lip which scorned the words the tongue uttered."

"Alas, that you should have watched so closely," answered Constance; and, after a moment's thought, she added; "but, as we are to have confidence in each other, dear Iola, I must feign nothing with you; and, I do believe, that it is as you say. Nay, more. There

is another, who knows him better than I do, who thinks so too."

"Who? Who?" demanded Iola, eagerly.

"None other, than good Sir William Arden," answered Constance; and she went on to give her cousin a sketch of the conversation which had taken place between herself and her companion at supper.

"I saw you talking very busily," replied Iola, with a smile; "but in truth, dear Constance, I almost fancied, you and the good knight had better subjects of conversation than the fate of Iola and Chartley. Well, thank Heaven, we have got another in the plot, who can give us good help too, in the hour of need, perhaps."

"A plot!" said Constance, with a look of apprehension. "What plot do you intend to form, Iola?"

"Now she is frightened out of her wits!" cried Iola, laughing as merrily as ever. "No plot, dearest cousin. I spoke in my wild way, and gave it a wild name. Only this, Constance,

be sure of, that if there be a means of escape—and what may not this respite produce—I will not give my hand to Lord Fulmer—No, even though a convent should be my only refuge, though Heaven knows, thinking as I think, that would be bad enough."

"Thinking as you think—I do not understand what you mean, Iola," said her cousin in some surprise.

Iola thought gravely for a moment or two, before she spoke; but at length she replied:

"Perhaps I am not so devout as you are, Constance, and yet, in some things more devout. There is another enigma for you; but, I know a convent would not suit me. You will say, I seemed happy enough in one; but, yet I have come to the belief that they are not truly holy or good institutions. To take the vows I should have to take, were I to enter one, to live according to all the rules and ordinances, to go through all the ceremonies, and to make all the professions, I should be a hypocrite, Constance—But to marry this Lord Ful-

mer, to vow that I will love him when I love another, would make me worse than a hypocrite."

Constance gazed at her with a bewildered look; for, though her words were not very plain, yet they created doubts.

"I do not know what to think of your language, Iola," she answered. "Holy men, fathers of the church, successors of the apostles, have founded convents, and blessed them. Surely they cannot be evil institutions with such a sanction."

Iola laughed, seeming not inclined to grapple with the question; and then, with a playful gesture of the hand, she asked abruptly —

"Would you like now, now as you sit here, to devote yourself for life to one of them?"

"That is not a fair question," answered Constance, with a blush and a smile; "but now, let us think, Iola, of what must be your conduct between these two men. To one you are bound by a contract, valid it seems in the eye of the law; and from which you cannot escape, al-

though it was entered into when you had no power to assent or to refuse. To the other, you are linked by ties of affection, which are even less easily broken, I do believe."

"Most mathematically put, dear cousin," answered Iola, in her old, gay tone; "but yet I can hardly reply. I must seek advice of some one who knows more of the world's ways, than either you or I do."

"My aunt?" suggested Constance. "She will say, there is but one thing to be done—to yield, and make the best of it."

"No, no. Not to her will I apply," said Iola. "Of the world's ways, dear Constance, of laws and rules, she knows but little—hardly more than we do. She can deal with foresters and bailiffs, sell timber or wheat, collect the abbey dues, regulate its expenses, rule her nuns wisely, though not strictly, and make devotion cheerful, without depriving it of reverence; but there is a wide, wide circle beyond all this, of which she knows nothing—nor I either, but that it exists."

"Then, to whom can you apply?" asked Constance; and Iola, rising, laid her hands upon her cousin's, with a grave smile.

"I will apply to one who will advise me well," she said; "but here, dearest Constance, I must —however unwillingly—hold back a part of my confidence from you. Were it my own alone, you should have it all, fully and at once; but there is another, whose confidence I must not break. Rest satisfied with this, that as far as Chartley and I are concerned, every secret of my heart, every act that I perform, propose, or think of, shall be told to you at once. You shall see into my breast, as if it were your own."

"But, yet there will be one dark spot," said Constance, almost reproachfully.

"Not concerning myself," answered Iola. "I tell you I am going to seek advice. What that advice is, you shall know. Where I ask it, who gives it, you must not know. This shall be the only reserve."

"And you will not act in anything, without speaking to me?" asked Constance anxiously.

"Certainly not," replied Iola; "but, you must promise in return, Constance, that my confidence will never be violated, that no notions which you may have imbibed of duty or propriety, or anything else on earth—no, not of religion itself, shall make you ever betray to man or woman, that which I shall tell you."

Constance seemed to hesitate; and Iola added, firmly, but sadly—

"You must promise, Constance, or there can be no confidence. My heart must hide itself from you, as from the rest of the world, unless I know that its secrets are as safe with you as with myself. Will you promise, without any reservation, remembering, that I shall look upon no consideration of 'my own good,' as it is called, as an excuse for your violating that engagement. I know you will keep your promise when you have given it."

"Assuredly I will," replied Constance; and, after a moment's thought, she added: "and I will give the promise too, Iola. If I did not, you could easily withhold your confidence from

me; and I do think, that it will be better for you to have some one, of whose love you can have no doubt, to consult with and rely on. Remember I do not know, and cannot divine who this secret adviser is, nor how he or she should have followed you hither, to give you counsel on any sudden occasion. Surely you would not rely upon your maid, in preference to your cousin."

Iola laughed gaily.

"Nay, Heaven forbid," she cried, waving her hand. "Besides, what knows she of the world? Poor Susan's utmost experience, reaches but to know, that Harry Smith, the abbey gardener's son, bought her pink ribbons at Tamworth fair, and asked her to marry him at Shrove-tide next. No, no, dear Constance. All my confidence you shall have—that is to say, all my own. I will only keep from you the confidence of others; and now your promise is given, is it not—fully and without reservation?"

"It is," answered Constance. "I know

you have always hated that doctrine of mental reservation, and called it unchristian and uncandid. I do not like it, and will never act upon it, though very good men say that it is sometimes needful."

"Fie on them!" cried Iola, warmly. "Those who would teach that, would teach any other kind of falsehood. — But now, my own dear cousin, now for a petition. Will you help your Iola to seek this advice?"

"How can I help you? What would you have me do?" asked Constance.

"'Tis but to endure imprisonment for an hour," said Iola, "to stay here and watch till I come back, and, if any one comes to the door, merely to answer, "You cannot come in!"

"That is easily accomplished," replied her cousin; "and I may as well perform my devotions for the night here, as in my own chamber hard by."

"Quite as well," answered Iola with a smile. "But now I must clear the way;" and, opening the door into the ante-room, she said—

"Here, Susan. Have the guests left the hall?"

"Oh yes, lady," replied the rosy country girl, who appeared in answer to her summons. "They did not sit long to-night. They have all gone to their chambers some time."

"Well then, I shall not want you for an hour," said Iola; and she added, with a laugh —"I know there is some one whom you want to talk with. But be discreet, Susan; and you shall have a present on my marriage, to furnish house with."

The girl blushed, and simpered, and retired.

"And now," said Iola, "I must cover over these gay robes;" and, opening one of those large cupboards, which, from the use that they were sometimes applied to, retained, for many years, and still do in some parts of Europe, the name of armoury, she drew forth a white serge gown and hood, which she threw over her other apparel.

"But where are you going?" demanded

Constance, in a tone of alarm. "Surely not beyond the castle walls. Your wanderings round the abbey used to frighten me sometimes, when the broad daylight shone upon you; but now, you make me fear still more."

"Fear not, and ask no questions," answered Iola. "I shall not be without protection in case of need."

"Oh, Iola, Iola, think well of what you are doing!" exclaimed her cousin, detaining her by the hand.

"I have thought," answered the lady. "See how the moon shines; and, hark, there is my summons."

Constance looked out and listened; and, faint upon her ear, the closed casement dulling the sound, came the same strain of music, which Fulmer had heard from a different part of the castle. Gently disengaging her hand, Iola glided into the ante-room, and opened the door leading into the passage. She returned the moment after, however, saying—

"There is some one moving. I must wait a

little;" but, ere two minutes more were over, she went out again, and closed the doors behind her.

Constance remained where her cousin left her, listening with anxious ears, for several moments; but Iola returned not; and, locking the door, her cousin cast herself upon her knees, and prayed fervently.

CHAPTER XIII.

We must give a glance beyond the waters. "What waters?" The reader may ask, "the waters of time?"

No, alas, that we cannot do. Let the eager eye stretch as it will, aided by whatever glass the ingenuity of man can devise, or his presumption use, that wide horizon will never present any object distinctly. A mirage may raise the images which lie beyond the scope of natural vision; but, after all, it is a fading picture, where everything is indistinct, uncertain, and confused.

No, the waters that I speak of are those which flow between the white cliffs of England and the shores of France; and I leap over no particle of time; for the day and hour were the same as those of which I have just been speaking; and it is to keep up the perfect synchronism of my narrative, that I am obliged to change the scene, and travel all the way to France, carrying the unwilling reader with me.

It was in a small room, lined with shadowy tapestry and ceiled with black oak, carved in a strange and peculiar fashion—in the form of pentagons, piled one upon the other, and each centred with a little gilded star—that there was seated, towards the first hour of the morning, an elderly man of dignified, though quiet aspect, habited in the robes of a bishop. Near the door stood two ecclesiastics, with a boy, of some fourteen years of age, between them, apparently equipped for a journey.

"And you are sure you know every step of the way, my son?" said the bishop, fixing his eyes upon the boy, and speaking in French.

"As well as I know the steps to my mother's door, my lord," answered the boy.

The bishop mused, and motioned one of the ecclesiastics to come nearer. The good man approached, and bent down his head, till his ear was on a level with the prelate's lips; and then, in reply to a whispered question, which the other seemed to ask him, he exclaimed—

"Oh, I will be his surety, my lord; for he ran between the armies, in the times of the late troubles with Britanny, and never betrayed his trust in a single instance."

"Well then, take him away for the present," said the bishop; "and I will write the letter at once; for there is no time to be lost. Entreat him kindly, and feed him well before he goes. I will call when I want him."

The two priests and the boy retired; and, when left alone, the bishop took some little time for thought.

"So far all is safe," he said to himself. "Once more I am upon these hospitable shores of France; and my escape is well nigh a miracle. I

trust no evil has befallen those who were, under God, my kind preservers. That dear child, I trust she got safely back to the arms of her good aunt, the abbess. 'Tis very strange, how often, by the merest seeming accidents, a kindness shown to a fellow creature returns to bless us after many years. Nor has man's gratitude any great share in it; for, how rarely do we find anything like gratitude, especially amongst the high and noble. Often too, those whom we have served have gone away from earth, and cannot shew gratitude, if they would; yet, still the good deed rises up, in after years, to shelter us, as a tree against a storm. Little did I think, when I entreated for St. Leger's life, and not only won it against all odds, but obtained, that his estates should be not confiscated to the crown, but transferred for life to his brother, with a provision reserved for himself—little did I think, that his sister would shelter me at the peril of all worldly good, and his daughter would guide me to escape in safety."

"Now for another act," he continued, draw-

ing a sheet of paper towards him. "I pray God this may be for the benefit of my country. Gratitude, in this instance, I want not, expect not, and shall not obtain.—It is not in his nature—well, if he turn not and rend me!—It matters not: it is right and shall be done. Better a cold and greedy prince upon the throne, than a murdering usurper. This man must labour for a people's good, for his own interest's sake; and then a marriage with the heiress of York will cure all divisions, and heal the wounds of my bleeding country."

He still seemed to hesitate, however; for, although he had drawn a sheet of paper to him, and taken pen in hand, he did not write for several minutes.

"It must be done," he said at length; and, when he began, his letter was soon finished.

"There," he said, when it was completed. "Now he can act as he sees meet. If he be wise, and occasion serves, he will say no word to this weak duke of Britanny, even should he be in

one of his lucid moments, but will fly at once to France, where, thanks to my efforts, all is prepared to give him friendly reception. If revenge get the mastery—and he has no small share of it in his nature—he will endeavour to strike at Peter Landais, and be given bound into the hands of Richard. Then farewell to England—Stay, I will add a few words more of caution and advice; for I must needs enclose the despatch obtained by my good friend, the woodman, to let him see the extent and nature of his danger."

The postscript to his letter was soon written, the paper, which the woodman had given him, enclosed, the letter tied with the silk, and sealed; and the boy was then recalled and charged with the packet. Manifold were the directions given him, as to how he was to conceal the dangerous despatch; and the youth, who seemed quick and active, retired furnished with a packet of ordinary letters, addressed to the Marquis Dorset, and several other English no-

blemen then living in exile at the court of Britanny.

His weight was light, the horse prepared for him strong and active; and, mounting in the courtyard, he set out upon his way, passing through the heart of Normandy in perfect security. Séez, Alençon were reached; and shortly after, the peril of the enterprise began; but he knew all the roads well; and, after sleeping at a small village on the confines of Normandy, he rose some hours before daylight, and made his way through narrow lanes into the duchy of Britanny, under cover of the darkness.

It is rare that a journey is performed with so little difficulty, even when there are much fewer dangers; but the messenger met with no impediment till he reached the town of Rennes, where his horse was detained for several hours, on the pretence that so fine an animal could not fairly belong to a youth of his appearance. But the letters he produced addressed to the Marquis Dorset, accounted for his possession of the animal; and, though there was not want-

ing inclination on the part of Landais' officers, to seize it, for their own or there master's use, they did not venture to do so; for it was a part of the treacherous minister's policy, to lull the English exiles into security by seeming kindness, till he could deliver them into the hands of Richard.

The letters, however, were strictly examined, and when returned to the boy, had evidently been opened; but the secret despatches, concealed in the large wooden boot which he wore, passed undiscovered. The contents of the letters, which had been read, only served to convince Landais, that his meditated treachery was unknown to the friends of the exiles in England.

Hastening on with all speed from Rennes to Vannes, the boy nearly accomplished the distance of more than twenty leagues in one day; but he arrived at night, and was forced to remain till morning, at a small inn in the suburb, on the right bank of the river Marle. He there gathered intelligence, however, of some importance. A

strong body of archers, he learned, had entered Vannes the day before, and the earl of Richmond, with many of his chief friends and followers, had sought hospitality at the fine old abbey of St. Gildas, situated on a little peninsula in the neighbourhood. Thither then, on the following morning, he took his way; but he did not arrive in the court of the abbey till the earl and his companions were just mounting their horses to set out upon some early expedition. The boy's shrewd eyes instantly detected, amongst those present, several who were not Englishmen; and with the keen good sense, for which he had been selected for that mission, he determined at once upon his course. The earl of Richmond he had never seen; but, perceiving that to one particular person there present, a spare but somewhat forbidding looking man, all the others paid much reverence, he walked up to him with a letter in his hand, and asked if he were the Marquis Dorset.

"No," answered Richmond, who had his

foot in the stirrup, to mount. "Yonder he stands. Is that letter for him?"

"Yes, my lord," replied the boy; "but I have several others from England."

"Have you any for me, the earl of Richmond?" asked the other; and, dropping his voice to a low tone, the boy replied:

"I have a word for the earl of Richmond's private ear."

"Deliver your letters, and then come back to me," said Richmond, in the same low tone; and then he added, aloud, "Here is a little courier from England, my lords and gentlemen, with letters from home, for most of you, but none for me. Take them and read them. We can well afford to put off our ride for half an hour. In the mean time, I will question the boy as to the news of our native land—Here, Bernard, hold my horse. Boy, give them their letters, and then come with me."

"Why this has been opened," cried the marquis of Dorset, looking at the epistle which he received from the boy's hands."

"I know it has, noble sir," answered the boy aloud. "All my letters were taken from me at Rennes; and, when they were returned, I could see they had been read."

"Out, young cur," cried one of the Landais' officers, who was present. "Say you, the people of the duke of Britanny would open your letters? Doubtless you opened them yourself."

"Not so, noble sir," answered the lad; "for, alas I cannot read."

"Well, well, come with me," said Richmond, seeing that the nobles crowding round him, had taken the packet, which the boy had held in his hand, and were distributing them amongst themselves, according to the superscription. "This way, lad—Permit the boy to pass, reverend father; and entering the abbey by a small door, at which appeared a monk, he walked on, followed closely by the boy, till he reached his bedchamber.

"Now, what have you to say to me?" he exclaimed eagerly.

But the boy, before he answered, closed the door behind him, and pushed the bolt.

"I have a packet for you, noble lord," replied the boy; "but I was ordered to deliver it to your own hand in private; and I have kept it concealed from all eyes, here in my boot."

"Then the people at Rennes did not find it?" asked Richmond, sharply.

"No one has ever seen it, from the moment I received it," answered the boy. "That I will swear to; for I have slept in my boots; and, when I took them off for ease, I kept them always in my sight."

The boots of an unarmed courier or post of that day, were of a kind, I believe now utterly banished from use, but which might still be seen in France, amongst postillions, at the end of the last war. They consisted of an inner covering of leather, with large and rudely shaped pieces of light wood, fastened round them with straps of leather, to guard the leg against any blow or accident. Out of these cumbrous appendages, the boy had withdrawn

his feet while he was speaking; and now, unbuckling the wooden cases from the leather, he opened a little sliding lid in one of the former, and drew forth the packet which Morton had entrusted to him. Richmond took it eagerly; but, with his usual cool, observing spirit, before he opened it, he looked carefully at the silk and the seal, to ascertain that it had not been examined previously. Satisfied on that point, he cut the fastening, broke the seal, and read the contents. His countenance, though the boy's eye fixed upon it while he read, gave no indication of what was passing in his mind. It was cold, quiet, resolute. When he had done, he thought in silence for a moment or two; and, then looking at the lad, he said—

"Thou hast performed thy task well. There is gold for thee. Were I richer, it should be more. Now tell me, how it came, that they chose one so young to carry tidings of some import?"

"Because I knew every inch of the country well," replied the boy; "because I had carried

many letters between the armies in the time of the war, and because my mother, and father Julien, said that I was honest."

"Good reasons," said Richmond; "knowledge, experience, honesty. I think you deserved your character. Do you know the country between this and Tours well?"

"Every part of it," replied the boy.

"And between this and Angers?" asked Richmond again.

"As well as the other," answered the boy.

"Well then," said Richmond, "open the door and call one of my valets. I retain you in my service, if you are free."

"Oh yes, my lord, I am free and willing," replied the boy; for there was that in the manner of the future king of England, which, though dry and cold, and somewhat stern, inspired respect; and the boy's character was peculiar too. The man who knows how to command, will always find those who are willing to obey; and the attachments inspired by the strongminded and the stern, are often more

rapid, generally more permanent, than the affection excited by the weak and gentle.

The boy's nature was brief and laconic; and, as soon as he had made his answer, he went out into the passage, and sought one of the attendants of the earl, with whom he returned to his presence.

"Take care of that boy," said Richmond, to the man, "and bring him to me as soon as I return. Treat him well, and let him have whatever he wants; for he has rendered me service."

Thus saying, he walked out into the court again, assuming a moody and somewhat discontented air. The reading of his letters and his conversation with the boy, had not occupied five minutes; and some of the English gentlemen were still studying the epistles they had received in the court.

"You have been very brief, my lord," said the Marquis Dorset, thrusting his letter into his pocket. "What news did the boy give you? I have little or none."

"I have none at all," answered Richmond.

"The boy only came from Rouen, I find. The English messenger stopped there. So I must wait for another long tedious fortnight before I get intelligence—I am glad to hear from Rennes, however, my Lord of Morlaix," he added, addressing one of the Breton gentleman, who had been placed with him more as a guard than an attendant, "that your noble duke is perfectly recovered, and gone towards Maine for better air, to give him strength again."

"Indeed, my lord. I had not heard it," answered the gentleman, he addressed.

"It is true, notwithstanding," answered Richmond. "Come, gentlemen, let us mount;" and, springing on his horse, he rode forth, followed by his whole train.

As he went, he continued to talk of the duke of Britanny's recovery, in a public and open manner, addressing some of his observations to the Bretons who accompanied him.

"I fear," he said at length, "that his highness may think me somewhat remiss, if I do not go to compliment him on his recovery."

He remarked a slight frown come upon the face of Morlaix, as he spoke; and that gentleman ventured to say—

"Perhaps, my lord the earl, it might be better to send a messenger first, giving some intimation of your purpose; for his highness, if you recollect ——"

"I know what you would say," replied Richmond, as he paused and hesitated. "His highness assigned me my residence at Vannes; and I am well aware, that observance of a prince's wishes, is of more importance than any mere point of ceremony. You, Dorset, are in the same case; but in this instance, happily we can do both: remain at the spot assigned us, and yet show our gladness at our princely friend's recovery. We will send every man, not tied down to this spot, as we are, to offer our sincere congratulations, and to show that we do not come ourselves, solely from respect for his commands."

"That, my lord, is indeed obviating all difficulties," said Morlaix, with a smile; "and

doubtless," he added hypocritically, "you will soon receive an invitation to the court, to receive the honours due to your station."

Richmond's face expressed no satisfaction at this answer; and, turning to the rest of the English exiles, he merely said—

"Well, gentlemen, we will not ride far or fast to-day, as you will need your horses for a longer journey to-morrow. I will write a letter of compliment to his highness, which you shall deliver for me, and explain that I only regret, I could not be my own messenger. Monsieur de Morlaix, if you will do me the honour of breaking your fast with me, at an early hour to-morrow, we will see these gentlemen depart."

The other bowed with all due reverence, and, with much satisfaction, seeing that the arrest of the earl of Richmond, and his delivery into the hands of Richard's emissaries, which he knew was meditated by Landais, would be much more easily effected, during the absence of so large a body of the earl's friends and followers, than it could be, while they so closely

surrounded his person. It was necessary however for the Breton to obtain distinct directions as to how he should act; and, as soon as he returned to the abbey of St. Gildas, he despatched letters to Landais, informing him of the proposed movements of Richmond's friends, and requiring orders for his guidance.

While he was thus occupied, the young messenger from the bishop of Ely, was again brought into the earl's presence, and the door closed and bolted. Richmond eyed him for a moment attentively, and then said—

"What do you know, lad, of the contents of the packet you brought me?"

"Nothing, my lord," replied the boy.

"What do you guess?" demanded Richmond, who seemed to comprehend and be comprehended at once.

"That your lordship is in peril from something," replied the other.

"Why do you guess that?" asked Richmond.

"Because I was told to be secret and swift," answered the boy, "to destroy the packet if

there was danger of its being taken, and to find means of telling you, if I should be prevented from delivering it, to be upon your guard against enemies. Moreover, I heard last night, that three hundred archers had marched into Vannes in the morning."

"Ha!" said the earl. "I heard not of that. They are rapid, it would seem. Now, young man, are you willing to serve me well?"

"Right willing," replied the boy.

"Can you guide me, by the shortest and most secret ways, hence to the town of Angers?" demanded Richmond.

"None better," said the boy.

"Well then, you shall do it," said Richmond; "but be silent and secret. Utter no word of what I say to you, even to those who seem my dearest friends. I have an expedition to make to Angers, to take counsel with persons much in my interest there; but none must know of my going—That is all—Stay, a word or two more," he continued thoughtfully. "It were as well, that none should remark your

staying here, or know that we hold private conference together. It may seem as if the news you brought from Rouen, was of sufficient import to justify suspicion. I will send you into Vannes. Stay there at the suburb at the Golden Dolphin, and mind you chatter not."

"I chatter little, my lord," said the boy.

"I trust so and believe it, my good lad," replied Richmond; "but it sometimes happens that youths like you, when speaking to persons of superior station, are silent and discreet enough, and yet find a noisy and loquacious tongue, when with their fellows—But I will not doubt you. You must have been proved, ere Morton trusted you. Only remember, that if you are not now discreet, you may lose a good master, who will make your fortune, should you prove worthy."

"I will not lose him," said the boy.

"To-morrow night I will speak with you more," said Richmond; "do you know a place near Vannes, called Carnac?"

"What, where the great stones lie?" asked

the lad. "Many a time I have played amongst those stones, when I was eight years old."

"Then meet me there with your horse, just at the hour of sunset, to-morrow evening," the earl replied. "Set off upon the road to Rennes. Turn round by the great fish-ponds, and wait between the first and second line of stones till I arrive—though I may tarry a little, still wait."

"I will, my lord," replied the boy, and left the earl's presence.

He kept his word to the letter; for, though he laughed, and jested, and talked with the people of the little cabaret where he put up; the name of the earl of Richmond never escaped his lips. He talked of the long journey he had had, and of how tired his horse was, and complained a little that the Marquis Dorset had not paid him for his services.

"Doubtless you are well paid before," said the landlord of the inn, to whom he spoke. "You seem a sharp boy, and not one to go without payment."

The lad laughed, and said nothing, confirming the man's suspicions, that he had desired somewhat more than his due. Upon the pretence of his horse needing repose, he continued to linger where he was during the whole of that day and great part of the next, always talking of going back to Rouen, till, at length, when evening approached, he payed his score and departed. The landlord remarked, as he went away, "Aye, there goes a young truant, who will be scolded roundly, I will warrant, for lingering so long, and yet will not want an excuse for his tardiness."

Slowly jogging on his way, the boy rode even somewhat farther than Richmond had directed him. But, to say the truth, he knew the country better than the earl himself; and he knew also the habits of the place, which, brought to the point at which Richmond had told him to turn off, a considerable number of the country people, going into Vannes, at that hour, to hear the evening service, at the great church of St. Paterne. Passing completely round the

large tank or fish-pond there, he approached the great Druidical temple of Carnac—the most remarkable perhaps, in the world—just as the sun was setting; and, dismounting from his horse, he stood and gazed forth at the bright sky, with interest very different from that which he might have felt, had he known where he stood. The boy was ignorant indeed of all the historical associations connected with the place. He had never heard of Druids, or Celts, nor of any other religion but the Roman Catholic; but yet there was a curious sort of solemn grandeur in that scene, with the thousands and thousands of tall stones, most of them then standing upright in their five curious ranges, with the rosy coloured light of the evening sky pouring in amongst them, which produced a sensation almost akin to awe in his young, though not very imaginative heart.

"This is a strange place," he thought. "I wonder what it means? These stones must have been put here by somebody. Perhaps they intended to build a church here long long

ago. But why should they spread them out so far and set them all on end. It can't have been for a church either. But they are all dead and gone, that's clear; and the stones remain;" and his mind being then led on from point to point, by some process within himself, he said, "I wonder what will become of me. It is very droll, one can never tell what is to happen to oneself afterwards. That earl said he would make my fortune. What will that fortune be, I wonder?"

The sun gradually sank; and all was darkness; but shortly after a pale gleam, coming upon some clouds to the eastward, showed that some other light was coming; and the moon soared up in time, and shed her light over the same scene. The boy looked round him somewhat timidly. He began almost to fancy, that ghosts of the dead might haunt those solemn places. All remained still and quiet however, till at length he heard the sound of a horse's feet, and ventured to look out. The riders were not near enough for him to see anything how-

ever; for the night was so still that he heard them afar. At length, they came nearer and nearer; and, taking his stand at his horse's side, he gazed along the line of stones till four horsemen rode in and approached him.

"Mount, and come on," said the voice of Richmond; and the boy sprang into the saddle at once. The earl had not stopped to speak the words; and ere the lad was mounted, he had ridden on some hundred yards, as it seems in a wrong direction, for he speedily heard a low voice, saying. "To the right, my lord. It is safer and shorter."

"But this is the road to La Roche Bernard," replied Richmond, turning, and eyeing him by the moonlight.

"But you must not go by La Roche," replied the lad, "but by Redon and Nozay. We will cross the Villaine near Redon. Then there is nothing to stop you till you get to Nozay, neither towns nor castles, but sandy tracks through the bushes. There is the

castle of Furette, indeed ; but it was burnt in the last war, and there is no one in it."

"Play me not false," said Richmond, in a threatening tone, but turning his rein at the same time in the direction the boy pointed out. "Ride here," he continued, "between me and this good lord. Now tell me, how far is it to Angers by this road ?"

"Some twenty-six leagues, my lord," replied the lad, "and by the other more than thirty."

"You are right there," said the Marquis Dorset.

"And what will one find on the other side of Nozay ?" asked the earl.

"Nothing to stop you, sir," said the boy ; "between it and Angers there is the little village of Condé, where you can bait your horses; and there is a good road thence to Angers, with nothing but hamlets or scattered farm houses, till you reach the town. No one would be able to take you from Redon to Nozay but myself—at least, nobody at Vannes ; but from Nozay to Angers you could go by yourself if you liked."

"You seem to know it well," said Richmond.

"I was born at Nozay," replied the boy.

There the conversation stopped; and they rode on in silence for some time, going at a very quick pace, till at length the Earl said,

"We must spare our horses a little, or they will hardly bear us out. Twenty-six leagues, think you we can do it in one day, boy?"

"Oh, yes, my lord," replied the boy, "if your beasts be strong and willing. The night is fresh, and the ground soft; and we can afford to stop and feed the horses at Nozay; for, if any one comes after us, a thousand to one they will take the other road."

"That is one recommendation to yours at all events," said Dorset, laughing; "and the ground is soft enough indeed; for it seems to me as if we were entering a morass."

"So we are," answered the boy, coolly. "We had better ride one by one. Then if I make a mistake, I shall be the first to pay for it."

Thus saying, he rode on boldly and rapidly, till, at the end of about half a league, the swampy ground ceased; and the country began to rise a little. Ascending by gradual slopes, the road which they now followed, and which was clearly enough defined by its sandy colour, gained a considerable elevation above the sea; and Richmond was just in the act of observing that they must have got at least eight miles from Vannes, when they heard the distant report of a cannon boom upon the air; and Dorset exclaimed:

"What may that mean?"

"That they have found out you are gone,'' said the boy, laughing.

"Did it seem to come from Vannes?" demanded Richmond.

"To a certainty," answered the boy. "The wind sets this way; but it is our own fault if they catch us now."

No other indication of pursuit reached their ears as they pursued their way, till at length the boy, pointing forward with his hand, said:

"There is Redon. You can either go through the town or by the ford. The ford is shortest."

"And safest too, in all probability," replied Richmond.

"I think they could hear that gun," said the boy, "if they could but make out what it meant."

"Then, take the ford, by all means," said Richmond; and, pursuing a narrow path to the left, which ran some way up the river, the lad led them to the bank of the stream, and passed safely through, though the water rose to the horse's girths. The rest followed; and, turning over the shoulder of the hill, at the end of a few miles, they entered a wild and desolate track, where woods and bushes seemed scattered over a wide extent of shifting sand, amidst which, all vestige of a road seemed lost. Straight on went the boy, however, without pause or hesitation, appearing to be guided, in finding his way back to his native place, by the

same sort of instinct which is possessed by dogs and some kinds of pigeons.

All seemed so dark—for the moon had by this time gone down—so wild, so trackless, that Richmond at length exclaimed, with anxious sternness:

"Are you sure you are right, boy?"

"Quite sure," replied the boy; and on he went, leading the way through one wide patch of bushes, round the angle of a little wood, down a little dell, across a rivulet, up a slope, into another track wilder than before, as if not a tree had been cut down or a bush grubbed up, since last he was there.

"There comes morning," he said at length. "We shall reach Nozay just at break of day."

"And right glad will my horse be to get there," said Dorset; "for he is well nigh knocked up. He has been stumbling at every step for the last hour."

"Food will set him up," said the boy; "and that he can soon have. There is Boha-

lard and its windmill, to the right, peeping through the dusk, like a great giant with his arms stretched out to catch us."

The sight of the windmill, and the boy's instant recognition of it, relieved Richmond a good deal; for he had not been able to divest his mind of some doubts as to his young guide's accuracy; for the country had been so wild and trackless, that it seemed impossible to him, for any one accurately to remember every step of the way, and one mistake must have been irretrievable in the darkness. A few minutes more set him at rest completely; for as the air grew lighter every moment, he perceived at no great distance in advance, a tower upon an elevated spot, and a little beyond that again, but lower down, the spire of a church.

"What is that tower, boy?" he asked as they rode on.

"It is called Beauvais, my lord," replied the lad; "and that is the church of Nozay."

"Then let us slacken our pace a little," said

Richmond, and according to the boy's prediction, they rode into the small town just as the sun was rising.

"Here, stop here," said the boy, drawing in his horse's rein before a house, which seemed somewhat like an inn of the second or third class; "this is not the best cabaret; but the landlord is the honestest man;" and by thundering with his fists at the large gate, he soon brought forth some of the inmates from their beds.

"Ah, petit!" cried the landlord, who was amongst the first; "is that you again, Pierre la Brousse? and so you have brought me some guests."

"Who must have food for themselves and horses, in a minute, father," replied the boy, "for they want to be in Angers before mass."

"They'll hardly manage that," said the landlord, looking at the horses; "however we must do what we can. Come in, come in. Jacques tend the horses. Come in Pierre."

"No, I must up to the top of the church,"

said the boy, "to see who comes after; for Maître Landais is no friend of mine; and if his people catch me, I shall taste hemp. So keep my horse saddled while he feeds—The gentlemen can do as they like; for they can find their way now; but I'll be away as soon as I see any one coming over the *landes*."

This was said aloud, and Richmond answered—

"No, no. We will go with thee, lad."

"Stay, stay; my son shall go up the steeple," cried the landlord, "he is quick enough in all conscience; and his eyes are good. You stay and feed, Pierre."

Such was then the arrangement. The son of the landlord was sent up to the top of the church to watch, while the whole party of travellers halted at the little inn, to rest, feed their horses, and partake of what coarse refreshment the place afforded. The horse of the Marquis Dorset however, would not feed; but by the mediation of Pierre la Brousse, that nobleman procured another very fair animal to carry him

on; and the furniture of that which he had been riding was transferred to the back of the fresh steed. The other four horses took their provender willingly enough; and, having seen this most necessary point settled, Richmond and his companions entered the house; and soon had some eggs, meat, and wine set before them. They had time to make a tolerable meal, but no more; for just as they had finished, the landlord's son came running in to say, that he saw a party of horsemen coming over the *landes*, at the distance of about three miles.

"How many are they?" demanded Richmond, in a calm tone.

"A good number, sir," replied the young man, "but I did not stay to count them."

"How can they have tracked us?" cried the boy.

"They had something running before them which looked like a dog," said the landlord's son. "It was too far to see exactly what it was; but it might be a blood-hound."

"My dog for an hundred angels!" said Richmond, in a low tone, "we must to horse at once—Were they coming quick."

"No, slow enough," answered the young man, following the strangers to the court-yard.

"Thank Heaven, their horses must be as tired as ours," said Dorset; and, paying the reckoning, the party of fugitives mounted in haste to depart.

"There is a gold crown for thee, young man," said Richmond to the landlord's son, before they set out, "and if thou and thy father can contrive to delay those who come after, for one hour, I promise on the word of an English nobleman, you shall have ten such sent to you by some means. If I reach Angers in safety, you may come and claim the reward—Now, on gentlemen, as fast as whip and spur will carry us."

On they went then; and, for fully twenty miles more, their horses bore them up well; but evident symptoms of failing strength be-

gan to manifest themselves about nine o'clock, and before ten it became clearly necessary to seek some fresh beasts. The houses were now, however, beginning to appear more frequently; the boy Pierre knew every place where a horse was likely to be obtained; and the four which were wanted were at last procured, some being found at one place, and some at another. It was none too soon, however; for while yet at the distance of some three miles from Angers, a large stag-hound with a silver collar, bounded up to the side of the earl of Richmond, and almost sprang upon his horse.

"Ah, my poor Taker," said Richmond. "Thou hast unwittingly betrayed me, I fear.—Look back, look back," he added to his followers; "they must be near at hand now."

Nothing was to be seen, however; for the dog had outrun the pursuers; and, for a mile farther, they did not come in sight. Then, however, they were seen coming over a hill not very far off; and, from that spot, the journey became in fact a race. Those who fol-

lowed, had evidently hired fresh horses likewise; or rather, armed with the authority of the duke of Britanny, they had taken them wherever they found them; and they gained perceptibly upon the fugitives. Now they were lost sight of in a hollow, as the road rose up and down; now they came in sight again, and each time nearer than before. At length, however, a glimpse of the winding Mayenne was obtained, and then towers and steeples were seen over the trees.

"Angers, Angers!" cried the boy, with renewed hope.

On they dashed; and, when they reached the gates of the city, the horsemen of the duke of Britanny were not three hundred yards behind them.

There however, both parties reined in their horses; and Richmond presented his letters of safe conduct to the guard at the gates. The pursuers did not venture to follow any farther; for they were already within the pale of France; and, wearied in frame, but relieved in mind, the earl rode on into the town.

As, now in security, Richmond cast off his clothes at the inn, and prepared to take some repose, his mind rested upon the events of the eight and forty hours just past; and his last thought, ere his eyes closed in sleep, was—"It is strange that I should owe my escape from imprisonment—ay, and from death, to a woodman in a distant part of England." He might have said, "and that England should owe him a king;" but all the coming time was dim to the eyes of the earl; and he only added—"I vow to the blessed Virgin Mary, if ever I should sit upon the throne of England, as some men think likely, I will find out that man and reward him."

CHAPTER XIV.

THERE was a hand laid upon the latch of the door; for doors even in great houses, had latches to them, dear reader, in that age of simple contrivances; and Constance asked, "Who is there?"

"Open, Constance, open," said the voice of Iola; and her cousin gave her instant admission, holding out her arms to her, and pressing her to her heart, as if she had thought that the companion of her youth was lost to her for ever.

"Have you been disturbed, Constance?" asked her cousin, kissing her cheek.

"Only by your girl, Susan, about a quarter of an hour ago," replied Constance. "I bade her come again in half an hour, and tell my maiden not to sit up for me."

"I have been long, dear cousin," said Iola, "and kept you waiting; but I could not help it; for there was much to say."

"And you have been far;" said Constance, gazing at her with inquiring looks; "for your gown is wet with dew—and torn moreover!"

"And my feet too with the brambles," answered Iola, sitting down, and uncovering her fair delicate feet and ancles. "My path has been almost as rough and thorny as that of the world, Constance—See how they have scratched me."

"But what did he say? What advice have you obtained?" demanded Constance, looking with no very serious commiseration at the scratches which streaked the pure white skin of her cousin.

"You don't pity me," said Iola, laughing. "You are a cruel girl."

"If the wounds of the world are not more serious than these, you will not deserve much pity," answered Constance. "I am anxious about graver things, Iola; but you are so light."

"Well, well, I will tell you," answered Iola. "Let me but put on these slippers, and get a little breath; for my heart has been beating somewhat more than needful. What counsel has he given, do you ask? How do you know that it was a man at all?—Well, I will own. It was a man, but an old one, Constance; and now I will tell you what he said. He said that a marriage contracted between infants was not lawful. That it was a corrupt custom which could not be justified, for that a reasonable consent was needful to make a marriage valid, consequently, that I am not bound at all by acts to which I gave no consent—the acts of others, not my own. He says moreover that religion itself forbids me to promise what I cannot perform."

Constance gazed at her with wonder and surprise. The view thus suddenly presented to her, was so strange, so new, so contrary to the received notions and opinions of the time, that, at first, all seemed mist and darkness to her.

"This is extraordinary indeed!" she exclaimed. "This is extraordinary indeed! Who can it be, Iola, who thus ventures to set at defiance, not merely the opinions of the world at large, but that of lawyers and fathers of the church, who have always held such contracts binding?"

"He says that it is not so," answered Iola. "He gave me many instances in which such contracts, especially between princes and high nobles, have been set at nought, where the church has treated them as things of no value, and lawyers have passed them over with little reverence. But I could tell you more extraordinary things than this, Constance. Men are beginning in this world to look with keen and searching eyes into these received opinions which you talk of,

and to ask if they are founded on justice and right, or in ignorance, superstition and craft. Light is streaming in upon darkness; and there is a day rising, of which I see the dawn, though I may never see the noon."

"I can understand nothing of all this," said Constance. "Dearest Iola, I think your wits must have been shaken by all you have undergone. You speak so wildly and so strangely."

"Nay, nay," said Iola. "I am as calm as you are; and these ideas which I give you, under the promise you have made, never to reveal one word that I tell you, I have long held and shall ever continue to hold."

"I have never had any hint of them before. I have never seen any sign of them," replied Constance; "and yet we have been like sisters from our infancy."

"During the last year, Constance," asked Iola, in a grave and solemn tone, "have you ever seen me kneel down to worship picture of saint, or of virgin, relic, statue, or crucifix?"

Constance put her hand upon her forehead, and gazed at her cousin with a look of bewildered dismay. "I do not know that I have," she said, after a moment's thought; "but I have seen you tell your beads. I have known you confess and receive absolution."

"I have told my beads, Constance," said her cousin; "and at every bead I have said a prayer; but it has been to God the Father, through Christ the Saviour; and I have ever prayed for direction in the right. I have confessed, because there can be no harm in confessing my sins to the ear of a priest as well as to the ear of God; and, if he has pretended to absolve me from sins, which God alone can absolve, it is his fault and not mine. I have thought myself little benefitted thereby."

Constance started up, exclaiming, "I will go and pray for you, Iola. I will go and pray for you!"

"Stay yet a while, dear cousin; and then gladly will I ask your prayers," said Iola; "but let them, dear Constance, be addressed

to God alone, and not to saints or martyrs. You will ask, why. I will show you in a moment. God has himself forbidden it. Look here;" and she drew a small closely written book from her bosom. "This, Constance, is the word of God," she continued, "the book from which priests, and bishops, and popes, pretend to derive their religion. Look what are its injunctions here."

Timidly and stealthily, as if she were committing an act of very doubtful propriety, Constance looked over her cousin's shoulder to the page which Iola held open in the book, and read on with eager and attentive eyes.

"Does it say so?" she asked at length. "Does it say so? What can this mean, Iola? Why should they so deceive us?"

"That I cannot tell," answered Iola; "for no good purpose, doubtless; but that matters little. It is sufficient for me to know that they do deceive us; and, in a matter that concerns my soul's salvation, I will not be deceived. We spoke just before I went, Constance, of

mental reservation. You own—you know, that it is neither more nor less than deceit. It is promising without performing, clothing a lie in the garb of truth. What does not follow from such duplicity! Will not they who cheat us, and make a profession of cheating, in one thing, cheat us in many?—Will they not cheat us in all? Often have I thought, before I saw this book, that it was strange, man should have the power to forgive sins. We are told that our sins are against God and against man. If against man, the only one who has power to forgive them is the man whom we have offended: if against God, then God only has the power. But all sins are against God, for they are all a violation of his law, and therefore he only can remit them perfectly."

"But he may depute the power to his priests," said Constance.

"What, the Almighty, all-seeing God, depute his power to blind impotent mortals!" exclaimed Iola. "What, depute his power of pardoning me, to a drunken, luxurious, sinful

priest! You may say that such a man has not the power, and that absolution from him is of no avail. But if you do, dear cousin, you are a heretic; for we are told that it is of avail. But what must be their idea of the great Searcher of all hearts, who believe that he has need of such instruments, chooses them, or uses them. Such is not the picture of Him given in this book. Here, God is God; the Saviour, man and God; the Holy Spirit, the comforter and guide of man from God. There is no other intercessor between man and God but the one, who is man and God, no other guide but the Spirit, proceeding from both Father and Saviour, no other atonement but the death of Christ, no other sacrifice but his."

"I am bewildered," said Constance, bending her head down to her hands and covering her eyes in thought. The next moment, however, she looked up, asking, "Then why do the clergy forbid us to read this book, if it teaches so to know God?"

"Because it is that which condemns them,"

answered Iola; "they profess that the religion they teach is founded upon this book, and in this book I find the frequent command of God, to search the scriptures. The priests say, I must not search them. Then, either they are not from God, because they contradict him; or the book is not from God, because it contradicts them. Now in this book I find innumerable proofs that it is from God; and they themselves declare it to be so. They are self condemned to any one who opens it; and therefore have they sealed it, lest men should read and know them for what they are."

"And yet," said Constance, "who was so eager as you to save the good bishop of Ely—who rejoiced so much at his escape?"

"I say not that there are no good men amongst them, dear Constance," replied her cousin; "for I believe that there are many; but all human beings have their weaknesses. I believe doctor Morton to be a good man; but of course he teaches nothing but the doctrines of the church to which he belongs—He dare

teach nothing else; for who would venture to incur, not only the loss of every worldly good, but death itself—a burning and a terrible death —when perhaps he thinks, he can do as much good, by following the ways of those who went before him, as by any other path."

"But truth is beautiful," said Constance; "and would a good man teach falsehood, when the very book of his religion shows him that it is so?"

"Did he ever read that book? Did he ever study it?" asked Iola. "Did he ever examine its pages closely, seeking no gloss or comment of those who would pervert it, but merely asking the aid of the Holy Spirit? Many a man is unwilling to examine too closely, when all his earthly happiness depends upon his shutting his eyes. Many a man is too timid to stand by his own judgment, however right, when there are a multitude of decisions, however corrupt, against him."

"But perhaps," said Constance, "the book

may be so obscure and difficult, that it cannot be understood without an interpretation."

"It is clear and simple as the unclouded sky," replied Iola; "as easy as the words which we address to babes. It was given to, and transmitted by, unlettered fishermen. It made all clear that was dark, and removed every cloud and every shadow. This book contains but one mystery, instead of the thousands which they teach us; and that mystery is explained, so that we cannot but believe even while we do not comprehend."

"But what does it teach, then?" asked Constance.

"It teaches that we are to worship God alone," answered Iola. "It teaches that to bow down before any creature, statue, or image, is to offend the Creator, and idolatry against God. It teaches that there is no mediator, no intercessor but one, Christ, and that the office of saints and martyrs, is to praise God, not to intercede for mortals. It teaches that the only atonement, the only sacrifice needful to ex-

piate the sins of the whole world, was that of Christ, that it was complete, full and sufficient, and that to look to any other for pardon, is to rob God of his glory. It teaches that man can be pardoned by God alone, and will be pardoned through faith in Christ. It teaches, moreover, that, if any man keeps the whole law of God, even to the smallest point, he has done no more than he is bound to do, and therefore that his good works have no power to save him from the original curse—how much less to help or to save any other. It teaches too, dear cousin, that repentance is needful to every one—the deep, heartfelt, sincere repentance of the spirit; but that, to seek, by inflicting pains upon our body, to atone for the evils we have committed, is to rest upon a broken reed, to presume upon our own strength, and to deny the efficacy of God's mercy in Christ."

Constance listened with deep attention, till her cousin had done.

"I would fain read that book," she said, in a

hesitating tone; "but the priests have always forbidden it."

"God says, 'read it!'" said Iola. "Who shall set up the words of man, against the words of God?"

"Will you lend it to me, then?" asked Constance, timidly.

"Oh, joyfully," answered Iola; "but it must be upon one condition, dear Constance. I have bound you by a promise, never to repeat anything I say to you. I must now have another promise, never to let any eye but your own, see this little volume. When you read it, lock the door. When you have done, hide it where no one can find it. I need give you no motive, dear Constance," she added, throwing her arm round her neck, and gazing affectionately into her eyes; "but yet let me remind you, that my life is at stake, that the least imprudence, the least indiscretion would give me over to a death by fire; for they hold those, who worship God as God himself has taught, to be heretics. We are not called

upon either to be teachers or martyrs. We may be permitted to hold on our own way, without offending others, so long as we worship not things of stick and stone; but, should it be discovered what my real thoughts are, that moment I should be dragged before those who would force me to declare them. I would never renounce my opinions or deny my belief; and the only fate before me would be death."

"God forbid!" said Constance earnestly. "God forbid! I will be very careful, Iola—more careful than if my own life was at stake."

"I know you will, sweet sister," replied Iola, putting the book into her hands. "Read it, Constance, read it, and judge for yourself. Try to cast from your mind everything you have heard on religion not contained in this book; and, if you do that, this book will as certainly lead you right as there is truth in Heaven."

Constance took it, and retired to her own chamber, where she sat down for a few moments' thought. Her first meditation however, was not of the book, but of Iola.

Was this the same creature, she thought, whom she had known from infancy—sweet, gay, playful Iola? Was this she whose heart she used to think the lightest in the world, whose deepest meditations seemed to break off in a sportive jest? At first it seemed strange, almost impossible. But yet, when she called memory to her aid, and recollected many of the circumstances of the past, especially during the last two years, she saw that it might well be. She felt that her own graver and somewhat slower spirit, might not reach those depths of thought into which Iola's seemed to plunge with bold and fearless courage. She remembered many a gay speech, many a half-reply which had appeared all sportiveness, but which, when examined and pondered, proved to be full of mind and matter.

"Yes," she said, at length. "I have loved her, but not esteemed her enough. I have known her well, but not the depths. She is all that I thought her; but she is more. Yet it was not she deceived me, but myself. She hid

nothing; but my eye was too dim to penetrate even the light veil with which her happy nature covered her strong mind—It is strange, what an awe I feel in looking at this little volume!" and she gazed at it, as it lay upon her knee. "It must be that I have so often heard that we ought not to read it, that I have yielded my judgment to mere assertions. Yet I have heard the very men who bade me forbear, call it the word of God.—I will read it. That word must be a comfort and blessing—But I will pray first;" and kneeling down she began, "Oh, blessed Saint Clare—"

But then she suddenly stopped, and meditated for a moment, still kneeling. She seemed puzzled how to frame her appeal. At length, however, she bowed her head upon her hands, and repeated in English the Lord's prayer. She added nothing more, but rising from her knees, unclasped the book, drew the lamp nearer, and began to read.

The clock struck four, and found her reading still.

CHAPTER XV.

One by one, the guests assembled in the hall of Chidlow castle, for the first meal of the day, which, as the reader well knows, was in those days a very substantial affair. People in high station, usually dined, as it was called, at a very early hour ; for, in all the mutations of fashion, nothing has changed more than the dinner hour in Europe. The labouring classes indeed, of all countries, consulting health and convenience alone, have varied very little. It was then about the hour of ten, when two or three of the guests appeared in the hall. Then

came the lord of the castle himself, with his sister, the abbess, on his arm. Sir William Arden and two or three other guests followed; then Lord Fulmer and some others, then Chartley, then Sir Edward Hungerford.

A great change had come over Lord Fulmer's aspect. He was calm, though very grave, courteous and attentive to all, though somewhat absent in his manner, and falling into frequent fits of thought. Even to Chartley, whose demeanour was perfectly unchanged, he showed himself polite, though cold, conversed with him once or twice across the table, and by no allusion whatsoever, approaching the subject of their rencounter in the morning. The meal passed off cheerfully, with most of those present; and, after it was over, the party in general separated to prepare for the sports and occupations of the day.

"Now, gentlemen," said Lord Calverly; "all who are disciples of St. Hubert, prepare your horses; for, though the month of May is not come, I am determined we will force a

buck before the day is over. My good sister, here, notwithstanding holy vows and pious meditations, loves well to see a falcon fly or a dog run; and she will accompany us on her mule. Take care that she does not outride us all; for the best Barb in my stables, except at the full gallop, will hardly outrun that mule of hers."

These words were followed by much hurrying away from the room; and, in the moment of confusion, Lord Fulmer lightly touched Chartley's arm, saying in a low tone—

"My lord, before we set out, I have a word or two for your private ear, if I may crave audience."

"Assuredly!" replied Chartley. "You can take it, my lord, when you think fit."

"Then I will join you in your apartments, as soon as I am booted," answered Fulmer.

In somewhat less than five minutes, after Chartley had reached his own chamber, he was joined by Fulmer prepared for the chase. As usual, where men have a resolute inclination to

cut each others throats, all sorts of ceremonious courtesy took place between them; and, after Fulmer was seated, he leaned across the table, saying:

"I have come, my Lord Chartley, to speak to you both of the past and the future. As for the past, I have had time to think, not only of what occurred between us this morning, but of my own conduct towards you; and I do not scruple to avow, that I feel I have been wrong."

"Then, think of it no more, my good lord," replied Chartley, holding out his hand to him frankly; but Lord Fulmer did not take it.

"I have not yet done," he said. "I have owned that I was wrong, that I behaved uncourteously and rashly, both last night and to-day, under the influence of strongly moved passion, which has now passed away. I apologize for it, and pray you to accept my excuse --So much for the past; and now for the future, my lord. I trust I shall not forget myself again; but thus are we circumstanced. You have

become acquainted with a lady contracted to me; you have had an opportunity of rendering her service; and I have no doubt did so in the kindest and most courteous manner. I mean not to say that you have done aught that is wrong, or that, knowing she was pledged to be my wife, you have striven to win her from me; but unwittingly perhaps, you have learned to love her yourself, and deprived me of a share of her affections — Deny it not; for it is evident."

He paused for an instant, as if the words he spoke, were very bitter to himself; and Chartley remained perfectly silent, with his eyes fixed upon a spot on the table, as if waiting to hear what this commencement would lead to.

"Now, my lord," continued Fulmer, with a sigh, "to my mind, two men cannot love one woman and both live. Such is the case with you and me. I grant that you have as much right to love her as I have. I am willing to look upon it, as if we were merely two rivals for the same hand; but still I say, there is but

one way of terminating that rivalry; for her faith is already plighted to me; and therefore the question cannot and must not be submitted to her decision."

"I understand your meaning, my good lord," said Chartley, seeing that he paused, "and think that your view is wrong —"

"Hear me out;" said Fulmer, interrupting him. "I have yet a few words more to say. My views can never be changed. They are based upon my own nature. I cannot live, Lord Chartley, in doubt or jealousy—I cannot live unloved by her I love. I cast myself upon your generosity then, to yield me compensation for an injury, even unintentional, in such a manner as will in no degree compromise the fair name of her who is to be my wife or yours."

"Upon my life, my noble lord," replied Chartley, in his usual frank tone; "I do not think the right way for me to win her, would be to cut your throat, nor for you, to cut mine."

"Perhaps not," replied Lord Fulmer; "but

so it must be; for it is the only way open to us."

"I think not," answered Chartley. "If I understand right, the Lady Iola is formally and fully contracted to you—I will not deny, Lord Fulmer, that this was painful news to me; but, I knew it was an ill without remedy; and I never even dreamed, from that moment, of seeking to win one thought of the lady, from her promised —her affianced husband. So help me, Heaven, I would never have seen her again willingly. I am not here of my own will, my lord. I am a prisoner, and would willingly remove myself to any other abode, to cause no pain or disquiet here. I do not believe, I never have believed, that there is any occasion for such disquiet. The Lady Iola may have won my regard; but, I have no reason to suppose, that I, in the slightest degree, have won hers. No words of affection have ever passed between us; no suit has been made on my part, no acknowledgment on hers. As you have taken a more frank and courteous tone than you assumed this morning,

I will not now scruple to say how we first met, and explain to you all that can be explained, without dangerously affecting another. You doubtless know, that I am here under the king's displeasure, for aiding my good and reverend friend, the bishop of Ely, to escape from the perils which menaced him. He travelled disguised in my train, till we arrived at the abbey of St. Clare of Atherstone, where he had appointed a servant to meet him with intelligence of importance. I sat next the Lady Iola at supper, but parted with her there, and left the good bishop in the strangers' lodging. Having cause to suspect that some one had left my train—a servant of Sir Charles Weinants—for the purpose of giving intimation of the bishop's place of refuge to those who might apprehend him, I turned my horse in the forest, bidding my comrades ride on. Various events detained me in the forest all night —"

"But, how came she in the forest too?" demanded Fulmer, gravely; for the frankness of Chartley's manner had produced some effect.

"I must pause one moment to consider," replied Chartley; "whether I can answer that question without a breach of faith to others—Yes, I can. The Lady Iola it was, who guided the bishop from the abbey, when it was surrounded and attacked by the king's soldiery; and, in so doing, her return was cut off."

"But how came that task to fall upon her?" again demanded Fulmer.

"That, my good lord, I can hardly tell you," answered Chartley; "for, to say the truth, and the mere truth, I do not rightly know. There is some secret communication between the abbey and the wood.—Stay, I remember; I have heard the bishop say, that many years ago, he saved the life of the last Lord Calverly, petitioning for his pardon, and obtaining it, when he was taken in one of the battles of those times. This is most probably why the task was assigned to the lady, and why she undertook it."

Fulmer mused gloomily.

"Perhaps so," he said at length; "but yet,

my lord, methinks some warmer words than mere courtesy must have been used, to induce the stay of so young and inexperienced a lady, alone in the forest, for a whole night, with a gay nobleman such as yourself."

"Warmer *things*, if your lordship likes," cried Chartley, indignantly; "for, by the Lord that lives, the thing that kept her there, was seeing the houses burning on the abbey green. That was warm enough. For shame, Lord Fulmer! Have you consorted with people who teach men to think, there is no virtue in woman, no honour in man?—But let me do the lady justice. She was not alone with me. My Arab servant was with us all the time—followed us close—sat with us in the old castle hall; and I do not think ten sentences were spoken which he did not hear. But, my good lord, since such is your humour, I will not baulk you. I have borne this long enough. Be it as you say. Wait but a few days, to let your conduct of last night pass from men's minds; and I will afford you cause of quarrel

to your heart's content, in which this lady's name shall bear no share. Then we will void our differences in the eye of all the world, as soon as I am no longer a prisoner in ward. There is my hand on it."

Fulmer took it and grasped it tight, with a feeling of rancorous satisfaction, which he could hardly conceal.

"Then for the present we are friends, my good lord," he said; "and I will take care, that nothing in my manner, shall betray our secret, while waiting your good pleasure."

"As you will," answered Chartley. "Put on what seeming you may like. I wear no vizard—But hark, there are the horses in the court-yard; and here comes Sir William Arden, just in time to go with us."

"In order to do what?" asked Sir William Arden, looking from the one to the other, with an inquiring glance.

"To hunt," replied Chartley. "Are you not going?"

"Oh yes," answered the knight. "Though

'tis somewhat early in the year. Yet I suppose my good Lord Calverly's bucks are always fat, so let us to horse."

Descending the stairs of the tower, they speedily reached the court-yard, and found all prepared for their expedition. The abbess was already on her mule, Sir Edward Hungerford in the saddle, looking down the length of his leg and thigh, in evident admiration of his own fair proportions, Lord Calverly by the side of his horse, and huntsmen and grooms, a goodly train.

Iola and Constance stood together to witness the departure of the party, having declined to join the hunt; and Sir William Arden paused for a moment or two, by the side of the latter, while the rest mounted.

The morning was fine, the scent lay well upon the dewy ground; a fat, solitary buck had been marked down in a covert, about two miles off; and he was soon found, and the dogs put upon his steps. He took straight across the chase, towards some other woods, at the dis-

tance of four or five miles; and it was a beautiful sight, to see the noble beast darting along across the open country, with the dogs in full cry behind him, and the troop of gay lords and ladies following. Chartley gave way to all the spirit of the hunter, and gallopped on, sometimes talking to Lord Calverly, or Sir William Arden, and sometimes to Lord Fulmer. To the latter his manner was courteous and easy; nor did the slightest embarrassment appear in it, although he caught the eyes of his elder friend fixed upon him, with a suspicious expression, whenever any conversation took place between him and his rival. When the buck was slain, however, and the morning's sport over, Sir William Arden took the first opportunity of riding up to his young friend's side, and saying, in a low tone, "I hope, my lord, you are not going to play the fool."

"Not more than usual, Arden," replied Chartley. "Have I shown by any signs, that the disease is aggravated?"

"Not that I perceive," answered Sir William

Arden; "but just as I was coming away, that dear little girl said something to me, I could not very well understand, about quarrels between you and that young lord there."

"Oh no," replied Chartley. "I will not quarrel with him; quarrels, we have had none since an early hour this morning. A few civil words only have passed since; and of them more anon—But who comes here, spurring so sharp to meet us. He seems to have a tabard on."

"Nay, how should I know?" demanded Sir William Arden, almost sharply; "if it be a herald, I trust he does not come to defy Lord Calverly in the king's name."

Almost as he spoke, a splendidly dressed pursuivant rode up, and demanded aloud, which was the Lord Fulmer.

"I am he!" replied the young nobleman, spurring forward his horse. "What want you with me, Master Pursuivant?"

"Merely to bear you his majesty's commands," said the pursuivant, "to join him at York, where he now lies, without any delay.

Not finding your lordship at the castle, I rode on to seek you, as the king's commands were urgent; and I must return with you."

Lord Fulmer's countenance fell. "Am I to understand then, that I go as a prisoner?" he demanded.

"Not in the least, my lord," answered the officer. "I believe it is in order to consult you upon some affairs, that the king sent for your lordship; but he ordered me strictly to find you out, wherever you might be, and to return in your lordship's train to York."

"Well then, for York, if it needs must be so," said Lord Fulmer, with an expression of much discontent upon his face. "I could have wished the command had come at some other time. Perhaps, I had better ride on before," he continued, turning to Lord Calverly, "in order to prepare my people for this unexpected journey."

"Perhaps so, my dear Lord," replied the old peer. "We should always in this world, take time and fortune by the forelock, otherwise we

shall never catch them, if they get on in front. I know the king intends to honour you to the utmost," he added, in a low tone; "so away at once, and show your zeal and promptness. There is nothing pleases a king so much, as to see diligence in obeying his commands."

"I would fain speak with you for some moments before I go, my noble lord," said Fulmer, in the same low voice; but the old nobleman made a sign of impatience, saying aloud, "no time for that, no time for that. You will be back in a day or two at the farthest."

"Then I must write," answered the young man in a whisper; but, raising his tone, he added, "Farewell, all gentlemen and ladies who are likely to be gone before my return. My Lord Chartley, I will not bid you adieu, as doubtless, I shall find you here for some days to come."

"By my faith, I fear so," answered Chartley, laughing. "His grace the king, when he has got his grasp upon a man's neck, is not famous for slackening it, as long as there is any head

above; but I wait his good pleasure in all humility, trusting that you will bring me good tidings, and use your best eloquence to work my liberation."

"I will, upon my honour," answered Fulmer, earnestly; and then, turning his horse, he rode away.

CHAPTER XVI.

THERE is nothing which should teach man virtue, if not religion, more than the study of history: not by showing that the result of evil action, is punishment to the ill-doer; for such is frequently not the case, in this world at least, unless we take into account the moral suffering which the consciousness of wickedness must produce: but by showing in the strongest possible light the vanity of human wishes, the futility of human efforts, when directed in any other course than that which leads to imperishable happiness hereafter. We often see the man

who lies, and cheats, and grinds the poor, and deceives the unwary, and wrongs the confiding, obtain the pitiful yellow dust which has caused so much misery on earth—We see the grander knave who plots, and fights, and overcomes, and triumphs, who desolates fertile lands, and sheds the blood of thousands, obtain power, that phantom which has led statesmen, priests, and kings, through oceans of fraud, falsehood, and gore—We see them all passing away like a vain shadow, snatched from the midst of trickery or strife, of disappointment or success, of prosperity or adversity, before the cup of joy is tasted, before effort has been crowned by fruition. A few lines of history, a brief record of censure or panegyric: then the page is turned; and all is over. The mighty and the good things last; and the spirits of those who wrought them are gone on high.

Richard walked in the gallery of the castle at York, his arms crossed upon his chest, his eyes bent down upon the ground, his brain

busy, rejoining the broken threads of policy: as great a man perhaps as a bad man can ever be. He was mighty as a soldier, mighty as a politician, almost sublime in the vast wide-stretching reach of his subtlety. Through life he had played a game almost against all odds; and he had won every stake. He had seen those, who stood between him and the light, swept away; he had contrived to remove obstacle after obstacle; he had crushed or aided to crush all the enemies of his house; he had imposed the silence of death, or the chains of exile, upon all personal opponents; and he had often succeeded in the still more perilous strife with the passions and the feelings of his own heart; for, because he was ambitious, and all things gave place to ambition, we have no right to conclude that his heart was without feelings even of a gentle and a kindly nature. Ambition was the idol; and to it the heart sacrificed its children.

As he thus walked, a man in a black robe, with a velvet cap upon his head, which he

doffed as soon as he saw the king, entered the gallery. His step roused Richard from his reverie; and, looking up, he exclaimed:

"Ha! How is the queen?"

"No better, I grieve to say, your grace," replied the physician.

"And when no better—worse," replied Richard, thoughtfully, "because a day nearer the grave. These days, these days, they are but the fevered pulses of the great malady, which, in the end, slays us all.—No better?—What is her complaint?"

"'Tis a pining, wasting sickness, sire," replied the physician, "proceeding from the spirits more than the blood. It has consumed her ever since the death of the prince was announced to her so rashly, which may have occasioned a curdling of the juices, and rendered them no longer fit to support life. I grieve to say, the case is one of serious danger, if her grace cannot be persuaded to take more nourishment, and to cast off this black melancholy."

"How long may it last?" asked Richard, gravely.

"Not very long," replied the physician; "I trust art may do something to correct and alleviate; but cure nothing can, unless the lady use her own powers to overcome this despondency and gloom."

"Well!" said Richard; and, at the same time he bowed his head, as an indication that the physician might depart.

"It is strange," he thought, as soon as he was alone again. "Not long since, I should have heard such tidings with a sigh. Ann is dying, that is clear—How beautiful, I remember her—how sweetly beautiful! Yet weak, very weak. The white and red roses might have adorned her cheek; but she should not have entwined them in her marriage bed. I loved her—Yes, I loved her well—I love her still, though her weakness frets me. Yet England must have heirs. The crown must not become a football at my death, to be kicked from John de la Pole to Harry of Richmond—At my death?

When will that be, I wonder? Aye, who can say?—There hangs the cloud. No eye can penetrate it. Turn which way we will, fate's thick dark curtain is around us; and no hand can raise it up; but we must go on till we touch it. 'Tis well perchance. Yet did one but know, when that hour of death is to come, how many things might we not do, how many things might we leave undone. Laborious plans, vast enterprises, schemes that require long long years to perfect, might all be laid aside, and our energies fixed upon the period that is ours. We work in the dark; and half our work is vain—Well, well, time will show; and our labours must not be imperfect, because we know not the result. Yes, with this ever-ready fate yawning before me, nought must be delayed. Ann is dying, that is clear. Had it not been so, perhaps it might have been necessary to put her from me. Rome is an indulgent mother; and the sacrifice of a few dozen lollards, together with some small share of gold, would have found favour for a divorce—But she is dying; and

that at least is spared. My brother's daughter must be her successor. I will move at Rome, for the dispensation at once. And the lady too? But no fear of her. She is ready and coming enough. She will have children surely, or she will belie her father and mother.—Heaven, what a progeny of them, while I had but one son! —Who goes there without?"

"'Tis I, sire," replied Sir Richard Ratcliffe, appearing at the door.

"Ah, Ratcliffe, come hither," said the king. "The queen is very ill, Ratcliffe—dying, her physicians tell me."

"Your Grace must bear Heaven's will patiently," replied the courtier.

"I will so," answered Richard; "but we must foresee events, Ratcliffe. The queen is dying—Men will say that I poisoned her; think you not so, Ratcliffe?"

"It matters little what men say, sire," answered the other, "since we well know that half they say is false."

"More than half," answered Richard. "Let

a man look devout, and do some seemly acts of charity, till he has made a name for the trumpet of the multitude, and he may be luxurious, treacherous, false, avaricious, if he pleases, he shall still have a multitude to speak his praises to the sky. But let another, for some great object, do a doubtful deed, though justified perhaps by the end in view, the whole world will be upon his track, baying like hounds till they have run him down. Every accident that favours him, every event, the mere fruit of chance, that he takes advantage of, will be attributed to design and to his act. No man will die, whom he could wish removed, but what mankind will say, he poisoned him; no enemy will fall by the sword of justice, but it will be a murder; no truth will be told favouring him, but a falsehood will be found in it; and his best acts and highest purposes will be made mean by the mean multitude.—Well, it matters not. We must keep on our course. While I hold the truncheon, I will rule; and these turbulent nobles shall

find that, slander me as they will, they have a master still. Oh, if Heaven but grant me life, I will so break their power, and sap their influence, that the common drudges of the cities, the traders who toil and moil after their dirty lucre, shall stamp upon the coronets of peers, and leave them but the name of the power which they have so long misused—But I must secure my house upon the throne.—The queen is dying, Ratcliffe—I must have heirs, man, heirs."

Ratcliffe smiled meaningly, but replied not; for, to mistake his purposes while seeming to divine them, was somewhat dangerous with Richard.

The king remained in thought for a moment or two, and then enquired, in an altered tone—

"Who is in the castle?"

Ratcliffe looked at him in some surprise; for his question was not as definite as usual; and Richard went on to say—

"I heard that the princess Mary, of Scotland, had arrived last night. I sent too, for Lord Fulmer—I will not have that marriage go forward, till I am sure; and if they dare to disobey me, let them beware."

"He is not yet arrived, sire," answered Ratcliffe; "but there has been hardly time. The princess, however, came last night. She went first to London by sea, it seems, and has since followed your grace hither. She had just returned to her apartments from visiting the queen."

"Ha! Has she been there?" said Richard. "That had been better not; but I will go and see her. Let some one go forward to say I wait upon her highness. We must have this marriage concluded speedily, betwixt the Duke of Rothsay and my niece, Anne. Then, Harry of Richmond, thou hast lost a hand: and a Scotch hand is hard, as we have found sometimes—Go, good Ratcliffe, go to her yourself."

Ratcliffe immediately retired; and, after me-

ditating for a few minutes longer, Richard followed him. He found two servants waiting at the door of the room to which he directed his steps, together with his attached though somewhat unscrupulous friend and counsellor, Ratcliffe, who had delivered his message and retired from the presence of the princess. The door was immediately thrown open, one of the servants saying, in a loud voice, "The king;" and Richard entered with a calm, quiet, graceful step, as unlike the man which the perverted statements of his enemies have taught us to imagine him as possible.

Seated at the farther end of the room, with two or three young women standing round her, was a lady apparently of some six or seven and thirty years of age—perhaps older, but she seemed no more—whose beauty could hardly be said, to have been touched by the hand of time. The expression of her face was mild and melancholy; but yet there was something high and commanding in it too. Her dress was very plain, without ornament of

any kind; and the colour was sombre, though not exactly that of mourning. She rose when the king entered, and took a step forward in front of her attendants, while Richard hastened on at a quicker pace, and taking her hand courteously, pressed his lips upon it; after which, he led her back to her chair. The ladies around hurried to bring forward a seat for the king of England; but he remained standing by the side of the princess, for a moment or two, inquiring after her health and her journey. She answered briefly, but with courtesy, saying, that she had preferred to travel by sea, rather than cross the border, on both sides of which were turbulent and lawless men.

"I have come, my lord, theking," she continued, "with full powers to negociate and conclude the terms of the treaty already proposed between your grace and my beloved brother, or the marriage of my nephew and your niece. You may think it strange that he should choose a woman for an ambassador; but, as you know I begged the office; and as you kindly seconded

my views, by the hint contained in your letter, he was content to trust me."

"I could do no less than give the hint, as knight and gentleman, when I knew your wishes," replied Richard; "but, to say truth, dear lady, I almost feared to yield to them. It is nothing new, to see princesses ruling states and guiding negociations; and, from all my own experience, I should say, that strong must be the head and resolute the heart which can resist their eloquence, their beauty, and their gentleness. I always therefore fear to meet a lady as a diplomatist; but I could not refuse, when you laid on me your commands."

"Yet I fear," said Mary, "that those commands, as you term them, were somehow made known to my brother or his ministers; for I find that several messengers were sent to England before I departed myself; and, the day before I set out, an old servant of mine, John Radnor, whom I always fancied faithful, and whom your grace knew right well, left me, with letters or messages, I am told, for England,

which were kept secret from me; and I have never seen him more."

"Nor have I," said Richard, gravely; "but when we are alone we will talk farther."

"These are faithful friends," said the princess, looking round to the young ladies who were with her; but, marking a slight smile, which curled Richard's lip, she added: "If your grace has matters of secrecy, they shall go—Leave us, girls."

The king and the princess remained perfectly silent till the room was cleared; but then Richard said:

"We, in high stations, dear lady, never know who are really faithful friends, till we have tried them long and in many ways. You said but now, that you fancied this John Radnor was your faithful servant. Now this surprises me not," he added, in a tone of gallantry, not unmingled with sarcasm, "for I always looked upon him as mine; and he, who is my faithful servant, must be yours."

The princess gazed at him for a moment

with a look of surprise; but she then bent her eyes down, saying, "I think I understand your highness. Was he a spy?"

"Nay, that is a harsh term," answered Richard. "He was not exactly a spy. Peasants and franklins, when there is a great man in the neighbourhood, will bring him presents or offerings of no great worth, on the sweet certainty of receiving something in return more valuable than that they bring. Thus did John Radnor with intelligence. When he learned aught that was likely to be well paid, he brought it to him who was likely to pay him best. But let us speak of him no more; for his tale-telling mouth is closed in the dull earth. He was killed by accident, on that very journey of which you speak; but his letters were brought on by some posts of mine, who followed close behind him. All the packets that you have sent me, within the last year, have reached me safely, I believe—those which Radnor brought, delicately fingered indeed, and those which came by other hands, either intact,

or resealed with greater skill. I have executed your commands to the letter, however, without attending to the recommendations of others, which sometimes accompanied them. But I grieve to say I have had no success. Many are the inquiries I have made; but not a vestige, not a trace is to be found."

The princess cast down her eyes, and crushed a bright tear drop between their jetty fringes. "Nevertheless," she answered, after a moment's silence, "I will pursue the search myself, though not doubting either your grace's kindness or your diligence. It is hardly possible, that his companions in arms should not mark the place where so distinguished a man lies, even by a stone."

"He was indeed," said Richard, "the flower of courtesy and the pride of knighthood. I remember the good earl well, just before he went to Denmark, to bring home your brother's bride; and seldom have I seen one so worthy to live in long remembrance, or to be mourned by the widowed heart with such enduring grief

as your noble husband, the earl of Arran. Did I know where he lies, I myself would erect a monument to his memory, although he took part with the enemies of my house."

While he had been pronouncing this panegyric upon her dead husband, the eyes of the princess, countess of Arran had overflowed with tears; but she answered when he ceased, saying—

"That were indeed generous; and I beseech you show to me equal generosity in assisting me to pursue my search."

"To the utmost of my power, will I aid you," replied Richard, "although I am sure it must be in vain. Let me, however, ask what leads you to believe that he still lives?"

"Nay, I believe not," replied the princess, "It is something less than belief—a doubt, a clinging hope. Perchance, had I seen his dead corpse, I might have felt somewhat of the same. I might have fancied that there was warmth about the heart, and tried to bring back life into its seat, though life was quite extinct. Such is woman's love, my lord. But you may

ask what has nourished even this faint hope, when twelve long years have passed, and when I received authentic news of his death in the last skirmish of the war. That man, John Radnor, swore that he saw him dead upon the field. The others who were with him, in some sort, corroborated the same story; but they were not quite so sure. My brother, all his court, affected to believe that it was true—to have no doubt thereof. But yet, if they were so thoroughly convinced, why, when they wanted me to wed another, did they press so eagerly for a divorce at the court of Rome—a divorce from a dead man! They must, at least, have doubted. Thus they taught me to doubt; and, ere I yield even to my king's authority, I must see and inquire for myself. All I ask is, let me find him living, or find where they buried him. His arms, his look, must have shown, whoever found the body, that he was no ordinary man, to be buried with the common herd on the spot where he fell."

Richard shook his head, saying, "Alas, lady,

you know not what a field of battle is. The blows and bloody wounds, the trampling of the flying multitude, the horse's hoofs, will often deface every feature, and leave the dead body no resemblance to the living man; and, as for arms, there is always hovering round a field of battle, a foul flock of human vultures, ready to despoil the dead, the moment that the tide of contest ebbs away."

"But this was a mere skirmish," replied the lady.

"I know, I know," said Richard. "He was hurrying across the country with a few score Lancastrian spears, to join Margaret at Tewksbury, when he was encountered by Sir Walter Gray, with a superior force. But think you, had he been alive, no tidings would have reached you from himself, no message, no letter?"

"That he should have sent none, would indeed be strange," replied the lady; "but you know not, my lord, how I have been watched and guarded. I know that some of my letters

from Denmark were actually stopped; and, till within the last two years, I have been almost a prisoner. Nay more, I find they spread a report that I was married to the earl of Hamilton, amongst many other strokes of policy to bend me to their wishes. All these things have made me doubt. 'Tis true, I cannot fully give way to hope; but, yet I perceive clearly, they themselves do not feel sure Arran is dead."

"Well, lady, my best assistance you shall have," answered Richard. "All sheriffs of counties, and their officers, shall be commanded to give you aid—aye, and to prosecute the search themselves; and to monasteries and abbeys, you will need no commendation."

"Thanks, gracious prince," replied the lady; and Richard, with an air of real kindness, answered:

"No thanks are merited, where the pleasure received is far more than that given. Would I could aid you farther."

And then changing the conversation, he

added: "You have been to see my poor unhappy queen, I find. She is sadly ill, poor Anne; and the physicians give but very little hope."

"She looks ill indeed," replied the princess, "yet, I trust that care and skilful tending may restore her."

Richard shook his head, and fell into a fit of thought, or seemed to do so.

"Her heart has received a wound that will never heal," he answered, at length with a sigh. "Man's nature resists these things; but woman's yields. Always a delicate flower, this last storm has crushed her. Our beautiful boy, our Edward, our only one, to be snatched from us in this sudden and fearful way! It was enough, surely it was enough to break a heart so tender as hers. Alas, lady, I must not indulge in hope—But this conversation unmans me," he continued. "I am not fit now to discuss matters of urgent business—To-night, lady, to-night we will talk of the marriage of your nephew with my niece. At present, I

can think of nothing but my dead boy, and my dying wife. Farewell, then, farewell for the present—Alas, poor lady! It has fallen hard upon her;" and, turning sharply away, he quitted the room, muttering words to himself, as if solely occupied with the fate of his wife, and the loss of his son.

The moment he had closed the door, however, he took the arm of Ratcliffe, who was still in waiting, and led him along the corridor speaking to him in a low voice.

"We must conclude this matter speedily," he said—"the marriage, Ratcliffe. I mean the marriage. I will have you go yourself."

"I am ready this moment, sire," answered Ratcliffe. "But tell me where I am to go, and my foot shall be in the stirrup within half an hour."

"Where?" exclaimed Richard, in a tone of surprise, "why, to the sanctuary at Westminster, to be sure. I must have you deal with our good sister, Elizabeth of Woodville, the

queen dowager, and persuade her to give her girls into my safe custody."

"That were difficult, very difficult, my lord," replied Ratcliffe.

"Not a whit," said Richard. "Be liberal of promises, say that I will wed her daughters to the noblest in the realm. Tell her, my own child being dead, my brother's children become objects of love and care, instead of fear. Assign them liberal pensions—aye, and give the same unto the queen their mother. Tell her, her kinsman shall be well treated and restored to their estates and honours, and contrive to whisper in the ear of my fair niece Elizabeth, that, were Richard free, as he soon may be, he would set her on the throne of England—Dost thou understand me, Ratcliffe?"

"Ay, gracious lord, right well," replied Ratcliffe. "I have never wanted zeal; and, if zeal can do aught, within ten days the princesses shall be in your grace's hand."

"Zeal! Thou hast more than zeal, Rat-

cliffe," exclaimed Richard. "Zeal is the gallant horse that bears us on full speed. Wit is the hand that guides him—Why look'st thou thoughtful, man?"

"I was but thinking, sire," answered Ratcliffe, that it were well to send off messengers to the pope. To wed your niece, you must have a dispensation. Rome has no pity for love's impatience, little consideration for exigencies of state. 'Twere well to have matters begun and carried on at once, with that slow court, or we shall have objections, and at first refusals."

"Refusals!" said Richard, with a bitter smile. "There are still lollards in England, Ratcliffe; and by St. Paul, if he delay or hesitate, his triple crown may lose its brightest gem. We are a devout son of the church, my friend; but still we must be tender to our subjects. See the bishop of London, when you are there, and bid him cease all flame and faggot denunciations. Tell him that reasons of state require us to be tolerant at least for the time,

and insinuate that we intend to pass an act, for the relief of men's consciences."

"He will send the news to Rome, sire," said Ratcliffe, with some hesitation.

"Let him," answered Richard, with a meaning smile; "'tis what I would have! I would provide something to give up, lest Rome's demands should be too unreasonable. A little fear too, is salutary. So see him, see him, and put the matter as I have said, strongly enough to create alarm, not strongly enough to give offence. But the queen and her daughter must be first dealt with. Let me have her forth from sanctuary, and my wife no longer in the way between us; and I will pass over papal dispensations, and laugh at Roman thunders.—You have your directions, away."

Thus saying, he turned to the door of his cabinet, round which several persons were waiting.

"Lord Fulmer has arrived, your grace, and is waiting below in the green chamber," said one of the attendants.

"Bring him hither," answered Richard, "and mark me, if any news come from the coast, give the messengers instant admission;" and he entered the cabinet.

CHAPTER XVII.

Richard had seated himself, and taken up a paper from the table, which he was perusing attentively, when Lord Fulmer entered. He laid down the letter instantly, however, and gave the young nobleman the most flattering reception.

"This is kind indeed, my lord," he said, extending his hand to him. "I did not think the journey could have been performed so quickly. It shows that you look upon the king's service as paramount indeed, when you

can quit your lady love thus, at a moment's notice, to render him assistance."

Unwittingly, the monarch touched upon a tender point, as the reader is aware; and Fulmer felt it painfully. A cloud came upon his brow; and he replied, somewhat coldly, that he was always ready to serve the king.

"So, so," thought Richard, who was a great master of looks, and a great observer of them, "this young man is moody. I suppose my messenger arrived just in time. We must put a stop to this."

"I am glad to hear it is so, my lord," he said aloud, in a somewhat proud and kingly tone; for while we can, as you know, curb with a strong hand the turbulent and the rebellious, we are ever willing to shower honours and rewards upon those who serve us zealously and faithfully."

"The only reward I desire, your grace," replied Fulmer, "is your kind permission to complete my marriage with the Lady Iola St. Leger as speedily as may be. I and my

family, have ever been faithful servants to the house of York—We have never changed our faction ; and, to your grace's person, you know I am attached. I trust then, that I may have your permission."

"Ay, and much more," answered Richard. "There are intentions in my bosom towards you, and my good Lord Calverly, which need not be mentioned ; but they will bear fruit—they will bear fruit ;" and he nodded his head significantly. "As soon as this expedition is over, on which I would have you go—I mean into Dorsetshire, to guard the coast there for a few days, and put down the turbulent spirit of the people in those parts, your marriage shall take place."

"May it not take place as I go thither, sire?" asked Fulmer, with an impatient tone. "I must have a day or two for preparation. 'Tis but the last ceremonies of the church are wanting; and I know that I shall have Lord Calverly's good will. I will set off immediately, when she is my own.

"What," exclaimed Richard, "has not my Lord Calverly told you that we propose to be present ourselves? He concealed it from you, to make it a pleasant surprise. No, no, this business admits of no delay. These turbulent peasants must be put down, before their discontent becomes dangerous; and you must away at once."

"May I speak plainly to your grace?" demanded Fulmer.

Richard bowed his head gravely; and the other went on, in a somewhat mortified tone.

"In quitting Chidlow castle now, for your grace's service," he said, "I leave a somewhat dangerous rival with my promised bride."

"A rival!" said Richard. "Who may that be? I thought she was contracted to you."

"It is so, sire," answered Fulmer; "but we all know, that no contracts are held very valid, by some men, against the power of love."

"My brother Edward thought so," answered Richard, with a sarcastic turn of the lip. "Who may this rival be, I say?"

"No other than the Lord Chartley," answered Fulmer, "whom your grace has placed in ward, with the lady's uncle."

"What that gay youth again!" exclaimed Richard with a laugh. "By my faith he meets us at every turn. But he shall be looked to—make your mind easy—he shall be looked to. Only serve us faithfully and well; and the lady's hand shall be yours, whoever may gainsay it."

"Her hand were of little value to me, my good lord and sovereign," replied Fulmer, boldly, "if her heart be given to another."

"Her heart!" said Richard, with one of those low, cold, withering laughs, so painful to an enthusiastic mind; "well, well, be you easy, this gay fisherman of hearts, this Chartley, shall be removed in a week or two, to some other place."

Fulmer was just in the act of muttering to himself—"In a week or two!" when the door of the cabinet was opened; and a gentleman in dusty apparel entered.

"They bade me come in, sire," he said, in

a blunt tone, "though the news I bear is not a fair exchange for a gracious welcome. The earl of Oxford, with some other gentlemen of repute, has broken out of Ham castle, and has taken the way to Britanny."

Richard smiled; and, seeing that the gentleman had something more to add, he said—

"Go on."

"It is but a rumour," answered the other; "but when at Dover, tidings were brought, that Sir John Fortescue, one of your officers in Calais, with twelve young gentlemen of good stock, had followed the same course."

"Ha!" said Richard, in a sterner tone. "Is this so wide spread?—But it matters not," he added the moment after, with the smile returning to his lip. "I have the wasp in my gauntlet; and he cannot sting, but die."

"There was much turbulence in Kent too, as I rode along," said the blunt messenger.

Richard mused for some moments, and then said—

It is not comfortable news, Sir Arthur.

Nevertheless be you welcome. Is there anything else, you have to say?"

"No, my liege," answered the old knight, "what I have had to say is bad enough; but, as I came along, not three miles from York, I passed a limber young gentleman, on a weary horse. I have seen him in John Hutton's train; and he told me that he had ridden post, from a place called Lyme in Dorset, whither he had come in a fishing boat, to bear your grace tidings from Britanny."

The news seemed to affect Richard more than all the rest; and starting up he exclaimed—

"Ha! Call me a groom, there!"

A groom was instantly called; and the king demanded, gazing at him with an eager eye—

"Has any one arrived from Britanny?"

"Not that I know of, sire," replied the man; "but there was some one rode into the court just now."

"Bring him hither, instantly," said Richard; and, seating himself again at the table, he

gnawed the side of his hand with his front teeth.

"Might I venture to say a word, sire?" asked Lord Fulmer.

"No, sir, no!" exclaimed Richard, vehemently, waving his hand for silence, and then resuming his bitter meditation.

At the end of a few minutes, a young gentleman covered with dust, pale, and evidently sinking with fatigue was introduced into the cabinet; and the king fixing his eyes upon him demanded—"What news?—You are Sir John Hutton's nephew, if I mistake not."

"The same, my Liege," replied the young man, in a feeble tone. "Would that my uncle had been still in Britanny, methinks he had watched better."

"Speak, speak," said the king, in as calm a voice as he could command. "Some mischief has happened—Say what has gone amiss."

"The earl of Richmond, my gracious lord, has escaped from Vannes," replied the young man. "He was pursued with all speed, tracked

by his own dog; but he reached the gates of Angers, just as the duke's men were at his heels."

Richard sat for a moment as if stupified. Then turning fiercely to Fulmer, he exclaimed, "Is this a time to talk of marriages? To horse, Lord Fulmer, and away. Your instructions shall be ready in an hour. Serve the king well, and the brightest lady in all the land shall be yours, if you but ask her. Fail, and as I live I will give her to another. By Heaven, we will take hostages of all men: there is too little faith on earth—The lady's hand for the best doer! Till then, I'll keep her sure—Away, let me hear no more!"

Fulmer dared not express the feeling which these words called up, but hastened from the room, with a flushed brow and cheek, while Richard, leaning his head upon his hand, muttered once or twice, "'Tis time to buckle on our armour."

The two gentlemen who had brought him the intelligence which had so moved him, remained standing before him without receiving

the slightest notice, for some five minutes, though one was hardly able to stand from fatigue, and both were somewhat alarmed at the absent and unusual mood, into which the king was plunged. His face was agitated, while he thus thought, with a thousand shades of emotion. Now he bit his lip, and fixed his keen eye upon the floor; now his brow contracted, and his lip quivered; now he raised his eyes to the fretted and painted ceiling over head, with a sort of vacant look, from which all expression was banished; and when he at length ended this fit of meditation with a loud laugh, both the spectators feared, his powerful mind had become affected, by the disappointment he had lately undergone. They tried, indeed, to suppress all signs of wonder; but he seemed to read their thoughts, the moment his spirit was re-called to the immediate business of the hour.

"Strange, Sir Arthur," he said, "that the things which—seen through rage and disappointment—are magnified, as in a mist, into giant evils, should, under a moment's calm re-

flection, diminish to their own pigmy reality. Here now, a minute or two ago, I thought the escape of this earl of Richmond from Britanny, and the reception in France, a mighty great disaster, the earl of Oxford's flight from Ham, a portentous incident. Now, it moves my merriment to think, how I would whip the dame of Derby's beggar boy, back to his Breton almshouse, if he dared to set his foot within this realm of England. By holy St. Paul, I would give him safe conduct over the narrow seas, and not place a galliot to impede his coming, for the mere jest of scourging him like a truant back to school, but that our realm has bled too much already, and that I hold the life of every subject dear. Who is this Richmond? Where is his name in arms? On what fields has he gained glory? Where learned he the art of war And is it such a man as this, shall come to battle for a crown, with one whose cradle was a corslet, his nursery a bloody fight, his schools Hexham, and Barnet, and Tewksbury, his pedagogues York, and Salisbury, and Warwick and

Edward? Where are his generals? Will Dorset —feeble, vacillating, frippery Dorset, lead the van, and order the battle? Methinks, it is indeed meet matter for merriment; and I may well laugh, to think that I should have given an anxious look towards the movements of this Tudor boy.—Say, my good friend, have all the fugitive lords gone with him into France?—But you are weary. Sit you in that chair—Nay the king wills it. Now answer me."

"No my gracious Liege," replied young John Hutton, "he gave them all the slip, I hear; sent them to the duke's court, to compliment him on his recovery; and thus having lulled suspicion, by the sacrifice of his friends, he fled away with only four in company."

"Is the good duke then well again?" asked Richard, with a slight frown once more contracting his brow; "what news of Master Landais?"

"I heard he was right well, sire, and in high favour with his lord," replied the young man: "but I stayed not to learn all that was passing;

for I thought your grace had been ill-served, and entering a fishing boat at once, I came over, and took horse. I have not lain in a bed since ; for, although evil news never make a welcome messenger, yet I fancied your Highness' service might be benefitted by early tidings; and I thought that if it should be really so, your frown would prove lighter to me, than your thanks for better tidings."

" You did well," said Richard, gravely, " you did right well, young man ; and shall not go unrewarded. Weinants has been outwitted : over discreet men often are. Now go and seek repose; and remember, take your place at the board of our gentlemen of the privy chamber, till I can place you better."

The young man bowed, with a grateful look, and withdrew. Then turning to the other, Richard said, " Are you too over-weary, Sir Arthur ?"

" Faith not I, my lord the king," replied the old knight. " I am hardened. My old clay

has been beat to such consistence with hard knocks, that it cracks not easily."

"Well, we will give you till to-morrow for repose;" said Richard, "then, good faith, you must back to Kent, and strive to quiet the turbulent folks. You shall have letters, and authority. 'Tis pity no hemp grows there; but you will find ropes at Dartford—You understand me."

When Richard was once more left alone, he strode up and down the room for several minutes, in much agitation. "No more losses!" he said at length, "No more losses! They must not be suffered to fall off. This marriage must go forward quickly, once more to heal the breaches in the house of York. They shall not be patched with Tudor clay. We must keep all, gain more. This young Lord Fulmer, I was somewhat stern with him in my haste. I must smooth that down before he goes. But I will keep my fair hostage for his faith—Chartley—There is great power and wealth and many friends, there. He must be won. Perchance this

heiress may be a meet bait for him too. Let them contend for her in the king's service. At all events, while I have the pretty decoy in my own hand, I can whistle either bird back to the lure."

END OF VOL. II.

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